

JUDAISM

WHERE DO I STAND NOW?

A Symposium

By Twenty-Six Distinguished Scientists,
Scholars, Writers and Academicians

CONVERSION "ACCORDING TO HALAKHAH"— WHAT IS IT?

Eliezer Berkovits

THE ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF EARLY RUSSIAN JEWISH SOCIALISTS

Erich Goldhagen

Ambassador College

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—*From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

I BELIEVE THAT OUR READERS WILL FIND GREAT interest in the symposium entitled "Where Do I Stand Now?" which occupies most of the space in this issue. The opening piece, "The Temper of Our Times," sets forth the condition in the world at large, and the Jewish community in particular, which impelled us to plan this symposium, as well as the terms of reference and the conclusions which, I believe, may legitimately be drawn from these twenty-six writers. The seven questions to which these valued contributors addressed themselves are set forth immediately after the introductory article. The replies are in alphabetical order by authors' names.

The crisis in the State of Israel since the Yom Kippur War has deep roots in the erosion of national confidence, the deterioration of the social and economic situation, and the major military and political perils confronting the State. The difficulties involved in creating a stable government are compounded by the controversy concerning the Law of Return, which arose because of the demand by the N.R.P. that the Law of Return be amended to recognize only "conversion *al pi hahalakhah*, according to Rabbinic law." Elsewhere we have had occasion to comment on some possible motives involved in this painful controversy.

This is not the aspect of the problem treated by *Eliezer Berkovits* in his paper, "Conversion 'According to Halakhah'—What Is It?" He approaches the substantive issue from an Orthodox perspective, manifesting a breadth of sympathy and a depth of understanding all too rare in such discussions. He underscores the resources within the halakhah itself for resolving the impasse in this situation and in other problems. He calls attention to the existence of two halakhic valid principles—not one—that appear in opposition to each other, both of which must be reckoned with, and he is able to offer a solution.

It is to be hoped that his broad-gauged approach will find a sympathetic hearing among the various parties involved in the argument. His paper demonstrates once more the truth that many of the problems of traditional Judaism are not inherent in the tradition, and may be solved within the framework of tradition. The paper should be required reading for all who cherish the viability of Judaism and the ideal of the unity of Israel.

As against the popular saying that history repeats itself, it has been maintained that the only thing men learn from history is that they learn nothing from history. The truth lies somewhere between these two positions. It is undoubtedly true that there is never a precise recapitulation of events, if only because each man is unique. On the other hand, it is true that there are patterns of behavior in the past that recur in the present and can, therefore, shed light upon the future. This is pre-eminently true of Jewish history, as has been noted from the days of Krochmal to the present.

A striking example of history repeating itself may be found in the spiritual odyssey which so many Jewish intellectuals have undergone in our day. It began with many of them cutting loose from their Jewish moorings, then being enthralled by the vision of an undifferentiated "ideal" society, of which they were virtually the only citizens, and, finally, becoming disillusioned by the harsh reality of events. As a result, some of them have ultimately achieved a synthesis of Jewish loyalties and human concerns on a deeper and more satisfying level. Others are still wandering about in a no-man's-land of their own creation.

This trajectory is not new in our day; it has had its prototype more than once in earlier Jewish experience. One such striking instance is presented in this issue of *JUDAISM*. In a richly documented study which brings to light sources of compelling interest, *Erich Goldhagen* traces the inner history of the Jewish radical intelligentsia in Russia during the 19th and 20th centuries. In his carefully researched paper, "The Ethnic Consciousness of Early Russian Jewish Socialists," the author refrains from drawing any moral for our time. But the reader can hardly fail to do so for himself.

WHERE DO I STAND NOW?

The Temper of Our Times

ROBERT GORDIS

THE PRACTICE OF *heshbon hanefesh*, "SPIRITUAL stock-taking," is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition. The High Holy Day season every year is designed to inspire each Jew to survey his life and values, and the extent to which he has lived up to the goals he has set for himself.

In days as momentous and perilous as our own, the task becomes doubly difficult and doubly important. The multiple revolutions which we are experiencing have eroded long-established standards or, at best, have weakened their foundations. Adjustment to change becomes all the harder because of the dizzying rate of speed that produces what has been called "future shock" for the human psyche.

The impact of this massive revolution on every segment of the population is tremendous. For the Jew, it is even more far-reaching, because he represents one of the most exposed sectors in modern society and is the most deracinated element within it, with the possible exception of the blacks. It is, therefore, vital that Jews take periodic soundings on their position, to include their external situation, their inner attitudes, their ideals, their fears, and their hopes.

Nearly a decade and a half ago, in 1961, our esteemed contemporary, *Commentary Magazine*, published a symposium entitled "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals." The contributors, who were primarily younger academicians, writers, artists and scientists, were invited to express their attitudes toward the Jewish heritage in its various aspects: religious, cultural and ethnic.

While there was, naturally, a substantial variety in approach and tone by the various respondents, generally the writers reflected a sense of estrangement from the Jewish heritage and the Jewish community. Ranking lowest on the writers' scale of values was the religious component of the tradition, and this applied both to the content of Jewish belief and the regimen of Jewish observance. The State of Israel was viewed more or less sympathetically, but clearly from a distance, the writers expressing little, if any, sense of personal identification with the young State and its future. Few of the writers had any feeling of affiliation with the American Jewish community as a whole or with any significant segment within it.

By and large, the American-Jewish intellectuals who were the contributors to the symposium were far more concerned with "humanity" at large than with the Jewish group, representing, as they did, perhaps the finest flower of "undifferentiated universalism" to be found anywhere. For centuries, Christian theologians had drawn elaborate contrasts between the narrow particularism of Judaism and the broad universalism of Christianity. This contrast was all the easier to draw because it rested upon a distortion of the facts with regard to both traditions. Modern Jewish intellectuals, even though they generally did not embrace the universalism of Christianity, accepted the indictment of Judaism as particularistic and, therefore, unworthy of modern men. Jewish culture, especially as embodied in Hebrew, was a closed book for most of them and was, therefore, obviously irrelevant to modern life. Yiddish was a patois for which some cherished a shamefaced nostalgia, but it was of no real importance. Religion represented the vestigial remains of earlier eras that were rapidly being outgrown and had already been dispensed with by all intelligent people. Science would not only supply the practical necessities of the age, but would solve all theoretical problems. In advanced Talmudic dialectic, it was emphasized that questions were more important than the answers, because even when an answer was forthcoming, the question survived. Modern philosophy declared that only those questions that could be answered had significance—those unanswerable should remain unasked. As for those nagging and useless questions that some benighted spirits insisted on asking, they were, as positivism assured us and semantics demonstrated, meaningless and, therefore, unworthy of attention. Ours was an age of hard-nosed technology bending its energies to the building of new and better hardware for even larger arsenals of destruction. The century belonged, in William James' phrase, to the tough-minded; those few who were tender-minded strove manfully to support their weakness for questions about ultimate values and existential mysteries. Major cracks had already developed in the facade of the modern world, but the structure viewed from afar seemed impregnable and new storeys were being steadily added to the edifice of pragmatic goals and practical achievement. It was the age of scientism militant and triumphant, and scientism knows no names, only numbers. A decade and a half had passed since the Nazi Holocaust, but men were still too close to its horrors to be able to assess its impact or to recognize the lurid light which it shed upon the all-but-total collapse of moral values in modern society.

To be sure, a cynic might believe that if a similar symposium had been undertaken among a group of intellectuals of Gentile background there would have been far more evidence of "particularistic" concerns, whether religious or ethnic. During the brief days of the democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia, it used to be said that the only true Czecho-

slovaks in the country were the Jews. The Czechs were Czechs, the Slovaks were Slovaks; only the Jews were Czechoslovaks.

The intervening decade and a half since 1961 has been fraught with momentous consequences for America and for the world. Here at home the breakdown of accepted norms of conduct has bordered on the catastrophic—a judgment which does not assume that earlier traditional values were ideal, only that their erosion left a vacuum that was not being filled. The catalogue is awesome—the widespread corruption in government, public service, business and academic life, the irruption of violence, not only in the cities but in the countryside, the drug and drink culture, the deterioration of education, the collapse of accepted standards of personal and family morality in favor of instant gratification, the escalating polarization of economic, ethnic and racial groups, and the legitimization of lying and cheating on all levels of society. All but destroyed today are such antiquated notions as the sense of the common weal, the concept of professional conduct, the notion of *noblesse oblige*. To cite a relatively minor instance, the ideal of sports and sportsmanship has almost totally disappeared. It has been replaced by an amalgam of boundless greed and limitless brutality that are the staples of the sporting pages and the sports newscasters.

Americans are confronted today by the most far-reaching challenge to their way of life, for which they are ill-prepared, having little more than widespread cynicism and pseudo-sophistication in their armamentarium of defense. And, since the “Americanization” of the world is proceeding apace, the disease is world-wide.

Jews, being human, have encountered these problems at least as strongly as their fellow citizens, but they have had, in addition, specific Jewish problems to contend with. After long years of indifference and neglect, the Jewish community in the United States has begun to recognize the threat to its meaningful survival that is inherent in the widespread defection of many of its potentially most valuable members. The rising tide of Jewish ignorance and alienation takes on protean forms, of which intermarriage and outright conversion represent only the most obvious manifestations. A contemporary theologian has spoken of the masks Jew wear. The tragedy goes even deeper—most of them are faceless beneath the mask.

These fifteen years have been momentous for the State of Israel, which has attained to an extraordinary level of achievement in all areas of national life. To be sure, the self-confidence and euphoria following the incredible victory of the Six Day War of 1967 have been dissipated by the tragic experience of the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and its aftermaths. Military tacticians will undoubtedly rate Israel's military performance during the Yom Kippur War as being at least equal to that of the Six Day War. After the initial setbacks during the first three days,

so costly in blood and materiel, the turning of the tide of battle was nothing short of a military miracle. But the Yom Kippur War was not decided on the battlefield—what was won militarily was lost through political and economic pressure. The wry epigram that Israel lost the Yom Kippur War because it did not win, while the Arabs won because they did not lose, is a patent exaggeration, but it is not devoid of a measure of truth.

The years 1973–74 repeated, on a far more distressing and ominous scale, the experience of 1956. During that earlier conflict, the Suez War, John Foster Dulles, combining pious moralism, sordid economic interests and personal prejudices, “persuaded” Israel to surrender the fruits of victory by a promise of American support if its security were to be threatened in the future. The support was not—and, indeed, could not be—forthcoming in 1967, when the Six Day War proved to be the only viable response for a beleaguered and deserted people surrounded by its enemies.

In 1973, the great powers, notably Soviet Russia, were perfectly willing to let the conflict rage so long as the Arabs seemed to be winning. When, after three days, the stunning reversal of fortunes became clear, the United Nations, which often seems to be little more than a cabal of Communist, Arab, pro-Communist and pro-Arab states, piously invoked the love of peace and the horror of violence, and again the fruits of victory were wrested from Israel. The worldwide oil shortage, like the gourd of Jonah, grew overnight and disappeared almost as quickly, leaving in its wake tripled prices for oil and fantastic inflation in all living costs. The oil shortage represents, in large measure at least, a conspiracy between the Arab oil producing states and the international oil cartels, who have gathered in billions of additional profits, snatched from the consumers’ pockets. Politically, the oil shortage has made it easier for the member states of the United Nations to practice the most unabashed cynical politics at the expense of Israel, that has no counters to play in the game of Realpolitik.

Yet the Psalmist declares that the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. It may be that the Yom Kippur War, for all its heart-break, may yet prove a blessing. At this writing, the successful signing of agreements of disengagement between Israel and its two most powerful neighbors, Egypt and Syria, offers some measure of hope that peace and stability may yet be achieved in the Middle East in our time.

In sum, these have been eventful and challenging years, both on the stage of history and in the more limited arena of Jewish experience. We, therefore, felt that it would be interesting to discover what changes had been wrought in the outlook of Jewish intellectuals, to whom the community should look for leadership in the days ahead. Accordingly, early in 1974, we communicated with a group of contemporary Jewish

academicians, scientists, writers and artists, and asked them to assess their positions vis-à-vis Jewish life, its problems and potentials. Though they were free to deal with the theme—"Where Do I Stand Now"—as they saw fit, a series of questions were set forth as possible guide-lines for their replies. Those who accepted our invitation included a fair number of the earlier writers in the *Commentary* symposium, as well as new figures who have emerged on the horizon during the intervening period.

What conclusions, if any, may be drawn from the 26 responses being published here?

The present symposium reveals once again the wide variety of commitment and outlook characteristic of the age. Nonetheless, it is fair to note a far higher degree of Jewish self-identification among the present writers, at least in ethnic and cultural terms. The role of the State of Israel is regarded as highly significant personally to many of them. There is also manifest a quest for meaningful identification with the Jewish community, whose weaknesses are candidly and clearly averred.

While spectacular conversions are not very evident among our symposiasts, the attitude to religious tradition is generally more sympathetic. Today, the press, television and the pulpit vie in describing a return to traditional patterns of life among our youth and their elders. The contributors to the present symposium are too deeply aware of the values of modern life to be willing to surrender them *in toto*, or even to denigrate them, as is so fashionable in some quarters. What they are seeking is a synthesis of a vital Jewish tradition and the modern values achieved by Western man. Even after the Holocaust and the widespread moral debacle in our time, these values are genuine, richly rewarding, and irreplaceable. If one has doubts on the subject, one has only to note that none of the *laudatores temporis acti*, "those praising times gone by," have turned in their citizenship papers and elected to go back to the conditions of the medieval Ghetto. The major challenge confronting Jewish life, upon which all else depends, including our relationship to the State of Israel, is the discovery of a vital traditionalism that is open to the best in the contemporary world, and a genuine personal commitment to the insights and values of such a life-style in practice.

In every creative period of the Jewish past, this kind of synthesis of tradition and life, of past and present, proved the highway to the future. This was obvious in medieval Judaism, in which the Golden Age of Spain produced rich fruits in Hebrew philology, medieval poetry, Jewish philosophy, and much more. It characterized older ages as well. The archaeologist's spade and the scholar's research have revealed countless links between the Bible and the ancient Near East. Today, we are also increasingly aware that the Talmud, a work that, like the Bible, is a product of authentic Jewish genius, is the result of the in-

terplay between the Jewish tradition and the culture of the Hellenistic-Roman world in the West and the Oriental world in the East.

Our society is not yet free, but it is incomparably more open than any earlier social system in human history. The synthesis between tradition and life is admittedly difficult to achieve, calling upon the finest resources of mind and heart that we can muster. Yet if it is not given us to complete the task, we are not permitted to desist from it. It remains an inevitable duty for those genuinely concerned either with Judaism or with the world, or with both. The contributors to our symposium emphatically belong in this company.

As the First Reader of these contributions I may, perhaps, be allowed an editorial comment. I believe that these papers, generally superb in quality and excellent in form, possess surpassing human and Jewish interest. They abound in striking insights into the complexities of the problem. Several are deeply moving, personal testaments. Their implications for the Jewish collectivity are all the more striking because they derive from the existential experience of actual personalities.

The basic impression derived from virtually all the papers is positive, not negative, an affirmation rather than a denial of the values in the Jewish heritage. At the very least, there is search for meaning in the Jewish legacy as a whole or in one or another aspect of the Jewish experience. The centrality of Israel and its central role in the problem of Jewish survival are widely affirmed. Nearly all of the writers lay stress on Jewish education, formal and informal, particularly on the level of young and mature adults, rather than the teaching of children only, which has created the phenomenon of "pediatric Judaism" so prevalent in our day. The conviction that there is abiding significance in Judaism should stimulate the task of explicating its religious, ethical and cultural content in an idiom appropriate to the human condition today, as has been the case throughout the thirty-five centuries of Jewish experience.

All in all, the contributions may be described as variations of a basic theme in an old Yeshiva song popular in Eastern Europe, *Vos mir zeinen, zeinen mir, ober Yidn bleiben mir*, "What we are, we are, but Jews we remain."

To be sure, the symposium is not the result of a scientifically weighted poll, so that any generalization is easily challenged. Nonetheless, one cannot escape the strong impression that while assimilation, often automatic, unconscious and impersonal, continues to go forward with ten-league boots, the contrary process of re-identification with Jews and Judaism is also a reality. Viewed in purely numerical terms, the negative factors of disintegration and alienation may be larger than the positive factors of re-integration and Jewish self-identification. But the entire history of the Jewish people bears testimony to the importance

of the "Saving Remnant," rather than the solid and stolid majority. Time and again, since Isaiah first enunciated the doctrine, it seemed that the end of the road had been reached and that the final doom was about to descend upon Israel. Yet, always there were factors that the historian has valiantly struggled to analyze and in which the believer can see the hand of God. Time and again the apparent end of the road has emerged as a new turning.

Hence, the significance of these two contrary phenomena of disintegration and re-affirmation cannot be evaluated purely in statistical terms. As so often in the past, the lesser may prove the greater. These contributions from some of our people's most gifted offspring may well prove to be a mirror of the future, bringing assurance that all is not lost and that no inexorable *fatum* has descended upon us. As Judaism insists, man is free to mould his destiny: "Life and death do I place before you this day—choose life!" The Prophet Jeremiah, living in an age of national collapse and imminent destruction, may well have spoken to our present condition when he declared:

Thus says the Lord,

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for them,
because they are not.

Thus says the Lord,

Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears,
for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord,
and they shall return from the land of the enemy.

There is hope for your future, says the Lord,
and your children shall come back to their own country.

(31:15-17)

But let the symposiasts speak for themselves.

The Questions:

1. What is your present outlook on religion in general and Judaism in particular?
2. What place does the State of Israel, in its various manifestations, occupy in your scale of values?
3. What are your views on Jewish-Arab relations?
4. How do you foresee the future of Jewish life in America?
5. What, if any, are your personal forms of Jewish self-expression and/or ritual observance?
6. What do you regard as the major problem confronting the Jewish community?
7. What do you regard as the major issue confronting the United States?

The Replies:

We Need Education

EDWARD ALEXANDER

PERHAPS BECAUSE MOST OF MY TIME AND ENERGY are spent within the academic community I tend to place an excessive emphasis upon the importance of Jewish education in assessing the future of Jewish life in America. But since attendance at an institution of higher learning has for some time been considered as natural an activity of Jewish life as eating and drinking, and since for a very long time the university has been a disaster area for Jewish "identity," I cannot think that the stress I place upon the centrality of Jewish education is entirely a function of my own profession. So long as Jews continue to attend our universities in disproportionately great numbers, it will be essential that they find the major areas of Jewish learning available to them as integral

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parts of the curriculum. (I might add that I think the infusion of Jewish materials into a college curriculum from which they are still largely absent is essential for the integrity of that curriculum itself and for the student body at large; but I write here primarily as a Jew rather than as an academic.)

The disaffiliation of young Jews from their own people and community during their years at college has, of course, been partly a result of the leftist political orthodoxy that prevails at the better schools. Insofar as this orthodoxy considers the Jews at all, it adheres to the traditional socialist distinction between the Jews as a people, and individual Jews who are willing to enlist in the party of humanity. The former is held to be a reactionary or racist or Zionist idea, an impediment to the removal of anomaly and injustice; the latter expresses the readiness of the left to welcome those Jews who are eager to spill their ink and their blood lavishly for the liberation of every oppressed group except their own. What Peretz once described as the message of the Russian Revolutionists for the Jews is still the message which young Jews are likely to receive on today's campuses:

Go, go on and on, with all liberators, with all fighters for a better tomorrow, with all destroyers of Sodoms. But never may you rest with them. The earth will burn under your feet. Pay everywhere the bloodiest costs of the process of liberation, but be unnamed in all emancipation proclamations, . . . You are the weakest and the least of the nations and you will be the last for redemption.

But another and probably more important cause of the disaffiliation which has typically occurred in the college years has been the relative, in some cases the complete, absence of Jewish materials from the curriculum. Although my undergraduate career at Columbia College in the 1950s included a great many courses in the history and culture of western civilization, I would never have received from that curriculum any notion that Jews had even existed between the time of the destruction of the Second Temple and their miraculous reemergence in the twentieth century to become the raw materials for Hitler's death factories. Nor did either of these events receive more than passing mention in courses dealing with the "mainstream" of history. Jewish history, Jewish philosophy, Jewish religious life, the languages of the Jews, were all implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) relegated to the realm of the parochial and the obscurantist. As a result of this regimen, a great many college-educated Jews, even including those with the most modest intellectual inclinations, came unconsciously to assume that Jewish life and the life of the mind were mutually exclusive.

In the three years that I have acted as chairman of the Jewish Studies Committee at my university I have witnessed, among a small, but important, group of Jewish students a heartening revival of interest, and a

desire to gain literacy, in their own culture: to learn Hebrew and Yiddish and Ladino; to study Jewish history and to read Jewish literature. Not surprisingly, the search for literacy sometimes get confused with, and even impeded by, the search for "identity," and students (prompted, to be sure, by many bad examples among faculty and administrators, both Jewish and Gentile) forget the distinction between an academic and a parochial institution. In the early days of Jewish Studies, students who wished to emulate militant blacks felt conscientiously obliged to murmur about the fact that we had a Gentile scholar teaching the course on "Jews in Spain." But far more disturbing to me was the confusion evinced by Jewish faculty members who, when asked about their willingness to apply their discipline to Jewish materials, would ask, "Why do we need Jewish Studies if we don't have Catholic Studies?" or would protest that their department already had so many Jewish members that it would be embarrassing to urge courses on Jewish subjects, or would insist that at a point in history when all the energies of right-thinking and progressive people were being dedicated to the liberation of blacks (and Chicanos, and Asian-Americans, and Native Americans, and women) nothing could be less immediate than Jewish Studies. Such responses would put me in mind of the character in *The Family Moskat* who upbraids his leftist fellow-Jews who have shortened their jackets and their hair and their memory, with the classic lament: "We dance at everybody's wedding but our own."

The fact that for most American Jews the future of Jewish life in this country is intimately bound up with the plight of the State of Israel should be a source of satisfaction, especially when we recall the horrifying indifference of American Jews to the more desperate plight of their European brethren during the Holocaust. But this sense of interdependence is also a source of disquiet. I know that some Jews even take comfort from the fact that the continuing strife in the Middle East will, for the foreseeable future, afford an external stimulus to the cohesion of Jewish religious and communal life here. But I think that this is as short-sighted a view as the one which stupidly supposes, even in the aftermath of the Holocaust, that anti-Semitism actually supports Jewish life. I hope that, one day, Israel will have truly gained its independence. I hope, too, that by the time that day arrives we will have raised up a generation of Jews who are literate in their own culture; otherwise, we will find American Jewry thrown back upon its own resources and unable to locate them, much less draw sustenance from them.

Triage for Judaica

NAOMI BLUESTONE

WE ALL KNOW THAT TWO JEWS LOCKED IN CEREBRAL combat will characteristically produce three opinions. Less acceptable is it that this prolific decision-making, particularly where matters of religion are concerned, is often based on ignorance, ambivalence, psychic intimidation, and (even among intellectuals) that certain atrophied capacity to inquire which characterizes the "*tam she-ay-no yode-a lish'ol*."

As for me, I was raised in an intense and committed Jewish home, and the classical education which I received is among the more luminous of my experiences. My religious values were primarily spiritually oriented. As a concerned and aware Jewish teen-ager, I rejected Jewish sororities, avoided Christmas, embraced Labor Zionism, and offered up countless tuna fish on the altar of mayonnaised and celeried oblivion. Although the weekly chanting in the synagogue meant little more to me than the comforting lub-dub of a mother's heart under a baby's ear, I sang out loud . . . particularly the mealtime *birkhat hamazon* which, given a large enough audience, I could belt out from *rabotai n'voraiikh* to *na'ar hayiti* without pausing for breath. I tell you all of this because one cannot simply state where one stands, without indicating whence one has come (as if human progression were a point in space instead of a somewhat jerky continuum). I have travelled a long road since my adolescence, but I can no longer depend on synagogue, ritual, study, family, or prayer to sustain my needs as a human being, or my identity as a Jew. However, I'm still around. And I'm *not* a Unitarian.

* * *

I believe that the major problem confronting the Jewish community is to ensure that each part which constitutes its whole (i.e. each individual) *knows* his identity and is permitted to pursue his spiritual and social needs in whatever fashion suits him best.

The community has been for so long a plural noun, an aggregate banded together by religious precept and functional necessity, that it may well have forgotten that it is composed of many individuals who no longer know who they are save by reflection, by assumption, by inference, by induction and by side-long glances. Even those who *know* who they are are constrained into roles which are fixated in the past,

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and do violation to the twentieth century's happiest emphasis, the individuation of the person. Fallen away are those who cannot be religious groupies; the loners, the disillusioned, the ambivalent, the crushed, the skeptical, the abrasive, the psychotic, the sensitive, the bright, and those who have been so badly hurt that they cannot forgive.

To borrow a phrase, each person approaching the universe we call Judaism should be able to take what he needs and give what he is able. All attempts to express identification must be unquestioningly respected, be they spiritual, intellectual, social, ritualistic, or uniquely expressive of the person. The intellectual snobbery, intolerant gossip, and preceptual one-upmanship which permeate observant movements should be discarded as unworthy of the interest of decent men.

Our history must be kept alive, for reasons not unique to our experience, and a foolish complacency spawned by the plastic era in which we live must not dull our remembrance of the yesterday which may recur tomorrow, for who can assure us not? Nevertheless, Judaism must give up willingly its sense of the tragic, as others are worse off than we, and a feudal response will not avail us against the onslaughts of familiarity, acceptance, emulation, philo-Judaic faddism and intermarriage blessed now by gentile grandmothers. However, we would do well to preserve a little of our inalienable right to be outsiders, even as we sit in society's parlor.

If war is too important to be left to the generals, perhaps Judaism is too important to be left to the Rabbis. Scholars and educators, who are leaders and academicians using religion as their laboratory but often having no need of it themselves, may be too remote from the Jew on the street, who has something to say but confines his comments to criticisms and petty carpings.

All our traditional rites of passage require dusting. The bar mizvah appears to have become a painful adolescent menopause in the religious life of most young boys. Women belong on the *bimah*, but only if they have strong spiritual strivings, not if they wish to turn the synagogue into another rancid arena of radical feminism.

It is, in a sense, too bad that Jews get to be born Jews free, with no need to earn the title or appreciate the status. If the proper duty were exacted, I think many problems of synthesis would fall into perspective. Diminishing the incompatibilities between the archaic (but lovely) traditions of Israel and the free growth of the individual is probably not as Herculean a task as reassembling the alienated and ignorant, who will not look back, nor hear us when we call after them.

* *

I have been asked what place the State of Israel occupies in my values *in its various manifestations*. The question was phrased as if Israel

appears like a vision, in infinite disguise, to the faithful. In fact, it does. No one loves Israel quite as much as the missionaries who come with testament and camera to *quell* over what the Chosen People have done with the Holy Land.

Israel means a lot to me, if not in the same way that it used to. It has been twenty years since my mother told me I was too young to go to Israel, but I understand that college kids are now fleeing there in droves at the same age. This may be because the United States is no longer a picnic, and mothers raise less of a *schrei* than they do when confronted with Australia or the Peace Corps. Most of these kids, fired by the high of a war, patrol Tel-Aviv thinking that Hess, Tchernikovsky, Ussishkin, Ben-Yehuda and Trumpeldor are streets. (Herzl, maybe, they know.)

Israel is a land of color postcards, which, like all aspects of material life, have improved beyond all belief since the days when I wanted to go on *hakhsharah* and build pipelines in the Negev. It's the place where all those gorgeous girl sabras, with their military bosoms and Uzzi guns, have now been married for a while, and their husbands want to date me on the side when they come to the United States on business trips.

Israel is the land of eucalyptus, milk, honey, olive wood, and plastic shopping bags dirt cheap. It is the place where you should be fruitful and multiply and, if you are single, God help you. It is the place where "Golda is the only *woman* in his cabinet."

Israel is also the national Jewish homeland, where rich and paunchy American Jews buy up condominiums at extravagant prices so that they can vacation one month a year and rent the rest, while my Israeli friends, Sophie and Naim, still live in one dreary room nineteen years after *aliyah*.

Egged drivers now play second rate American rock instead of Beethoven, but you would still want your daughter to marry one. And, nowadays, the natives tell you to "spik English" instead of poking fun at your "*miutah Amerika-it*."

Israel is the place where I can no longer blend in by wearing sandals and aping the natives and, therefore, be accepted *in spite of* being an American.

Israel is the country that took my money instead of my body. I still feel its tides pulling, long after the Israelis' scorn and derision has given way to an understanding of my needs and a quick willingness to overlook their Zionist scruples as long as I continue to invest each year and remain a good diaspora Jew with a kindly eye to the middle east and bring coffee the next time I come.

I am the Jewish everyperson. Israel is the country where, if anything should happen, I would be irreparably damaged, because every one must have a country and know who he is and, curiously, the United

States has adopted me well, but where is my home, and who, after all, am I?

* * *

An American medical student studying attitudes of Israelis towards psychiatry recently concluded that many people, thinking their troubles would vanish when they arrived in *Erez Zion*, became confused and embittered when they discovered that neurosis had landed with them at Lud. This remarkable belief in the healing powers of a territorial jinni may still be the fundamental goad which drives the Arabs to perennial frenzy, for they are, after all, living relics of the historical stratum during which this striving for an idealized Eden began to be incorporated into the Jewish consciousness.

There are, of course, others equally symbolic and potent. The Arabs are our brothers. What amazes me is how little both Jews and Arabs are willing to acknowledge their blood bond, to come to terms with it, or to examine the many myths and legends which have intensified this incestuous, not merely neighborly, war between them.

I am thinking, for example, of the myth of the return of the rightful heir. Many cultures recount, in one form or another, the legend of the chosen brother, kidnapped in infancy to forestall the prophecy of usurpation, doomed to destruction by hostile forces of overwhelming magnitude, raised in a foreign clime to maturity by the aid of a friendly agent of fortune, and ultimately enabled to return to claim the throne from the hands of the less worthy sibling. Can anyone considering this truly believe that the Arabs are reacting merely to the presence of a capitalistic western technocracy in their ancestral kingdoms?

The Israelis need their social scientists, their ethnologists, cultural anthropologists and psychiatrists if they are not to depend on positive loss-kill ratios to define progress. I'm not sure they know that.

Nevertheless, today, I think some cooling winds are blowing over the wastelands. Arab intransigence and impenetrability is admitting more reason without perceived loss of face. Israeli conviction in the right has been undermined enough to increase the chance of widening the understanding which all men crave more than they do material or territorial concessions. Blood and time, the old enemy and friend, hand in hand, may well be reaping beneficial harvests.

The Jewish Malaise

WERNER COHN

I SEE THE CONDITION OF BEING A JEW IN NORTH America today as a series of genuine dilemmas. While I will sketch some possible solutions, I need to make it clear at the outset that I do not consider any one, or any possible set of solutions, as fully satisfactory. But, then, we Jews are not the only ones with problems that lack ideal remedies.

The first dilemma is the most fundamental. The pressures and opportunities of assimilation into the non-Jewish environment are perhaps greater today in North America than they ever have been for any Jewish community. Many Jews are taking individual steps to leave the Jewish group altogether. In the Canadian province in which I live, and which is, admittedly, not typical of either Canada or North America, fully one half of Jewish young people, according to government statistics, are currently marrying non-Jewish partners. Leaving the Jewish group takes a variety of forms, and many people seek compromise solutions. I have been impressed with the analysis of Charles S. Liebman, in *The Ambivalent American Jew*, that all compromises between Jewish survival and assimilation to American culture tend to be unsuccessful. I personally choose to remain a Jew for what I consider to be overriding reasons of loyalty to my own background. But I could not argue that this option is more rational than assimilation, nor could I necessarily recommend it as a choice for others.

But even after one has decided, deliberately or otherwise, to reject the path of assimilation, the series of dilemmas to which I refer has by no means come to an end. The Jewish tradition has many aspects, and no matter which ones one identifies with, there are other facets of Jewishness which, thereby, become rejected. The superficial way of seeing this is to consider that choosing the way of Zionism (which I do) is to reject the traditions of the Diaspora; or that choosing Jewish secularism (which I do) is to reject religiosity.

My own analysis of North American Jewry leads me to think of the occupational patterns of Jews as the most significant indicator of our condition. (Unfortunately, Liebman pays no attention to occupational distributions). Speaking very broadly, one may say that North American Jews are rather tightly restricted to the following occupations:

- a) intellectual: the academic life

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- b) free professions: medicine, law
- c) small manufacturing: clothing, etc.
- d) retail and wholesale trade: clothing, house furnishings, etc.
- e) marginal merchandising: junk trade, pawn brokerage
- f) money manipulation: "import-export," factoring, diamonds, real estate speculations
- g) soul manipulation: psychoanalysis, psychology, social work, group therapy, rabbinate
- h) culture and popular culture: entertainment, journalism, etc.
- i) government bureaucracy (mostly on the two coasts): public school teaching, poverty bureaucracy, etc.
- j) professional leftism: functionaries for old-left parties and new-left causes

Some of these occupations, for instance psychoanalysis and pawn brokerage, are almost completely in the hands of Jews; others have Jews in numbers sufficient to influence strongly the nature of the occupation, for instance journalism, the movie industry, and professional leftism; in still others, for instance retail trade, Jews form less influential minorities. Non-Jews are found in all of these listed occupations together with Jews, but Jews are not found in any significant numbers outside of them (the list is, of course, meant to be suggestive and not exhaustive). There are almost no Jewish manual workers, practically no Jewish farmers.

Now, my purpose in thus sketching our occupational peculiarities is to suggest, not merely that the American *galut* has forced all of us into a cultural and ideological ghetto, it is to suggest, more particularly, that this ghetto has disparate aspects and that as individuals we are forced into choices. For example, my own interests in scholarship and the intellectual life preclude any very active interest in, or even sympathy for those who pursue, certain of the other callings I have listed.

My other purpose in presenting a list of Jewish occupations is to point to the depressing restrictiveness of our lives and to a resulting ghetto-like isolation from all of those non-Jews who do not happen to partake of our own occupational peculiarities. There are vast social areas of North America to which Jews have almost no access. Jewish relationships to black people, to farmers, to workers (i.e., to real workers, not to those who figure in New York Jewish left-wing fantasies), and to the upper classes are marked by great ignorance on both sides and, it must be assumed, by considerable reciprocal hostility. In many very real ways, Jews are foreigners to such people, and are perceived as such.

This alienated condition is what I would call the Jewish malaise. It has resulted in a number of proposed ideological remedies, particularly radicalism and a prevailing liberalism on the one side, and Zionism on the other. Without attempting to argue the point here (and it has been argued much more effectively than I could by Walter Laqueur in chapter

eight of his *A History of Unionism*), let me say that I cannot see any honest or effective ideological answer to the Jewish condition outside of the Zionist solution. I consider much of the participation by Jews in non-Jewish liberal and leftist causes to be a displacement of resentful feelings which originate in the Jewish malaise.

My recent stay in Israel has persuaded me more than ever toward the Zionist (i.e. selective) emphasis on Jewish values and Jewish traditions. I mean Zionism in the narrower and older sense of emigration to Israel; and I mean it in the Socialist-Zionist sense of rejection of *galut* ways and *galut* occupations. Most specifically, I mean it in the sense of the kibbutz reconstruction of social relationships. So much for an ideological statement of "Where I Stand Now."

There remains the most important question of what to do personally and immediately about the kind of Jewish commitment which I have claimed as my own. Since I have not found it possible to live on a kibbutz myself—for various reasons having to do with age, language, and, more particularly, with life-long *galut* habits—I must come back to the beginning of my discussion and disclaim any easy or fully satisfactory answers to the Jewish condition. I would now say two things: I feel, first, that the Socialist-Zionist aspirations correspond to the long-term needs of the Jewish people, but that the concrete social conditions of American Jewry make Israel's absorptive capacities in our case very questionable. I would say, secondly, that while the practical steps which we can actually take may lead us hither and yon, the essential rightness of Zionism is not in question.

I Am Hopeful

LEONARD J. FEIN

AS THE THEME IS, "WHERE DO I STAND NOW," the suggestion is that where I now stand is in a place that is different from where I stood then, at some earlier time. But how did you know? I had thought my tracks well-hidden, and surely no one has read my occasional musings so carefully as to have noticed the shift over time.

Yet it is so, there has been a shift. Where I stand, uncertainly, now, is indeed not where I used to stand. Not less than other people, per-

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haps a bit more than most, I have moved into a more private trajectory, concerned less with policies and more with persons. I used to view precinct work with contempt, supposing that while the precinct workers were busily ringing their assigned doorbells, one at a time, there were, hidden in the woods, giant factories producing doorbells at a rate far higher than our capacity to ring them. Go for the factories, I counselled, that is where the power is, that is, therefore, where reform must begin, where the action ought to be.

Not any longer. I still believe the factories must be dealt with, and reformed, but I am more impressed with the degree to which attention to the factories also diverts attention from the self, and is, for too many of us, a way of escape from self. "*Dunam aharei dunam*" is the way Israel was built; person after person, one at a time, or three, or ten—that is the way an American Jewish community will be built.

That, I imagine, is the teacher in me speaking, perhaps as well the person still a-borning. The political scientist and sometime activist in me is uncomfortable with so private and tediously incremental a perspective, and wants action. Since 1968, when the Grand Coalition came undone, when we stopped singing "We Shall Overcome" except as an exercise in nostalgia, I have had a vacation from politics, not knowing any more than the next person what to do politically. (And, unlike some of my friends, having the courage to act on my lack of conviction. By doing nothing.) But the world continues to crumble, and '76 is coming up on us fast, and the time for rest is over, it is time, again, to pick up the banners and get to work.

I intend here not so much the specific banners of internal Jewish politics, which are, for the most part, irrelevant to the lives of most American Jews. I intend the banners of our complex commitment to *tikkun olam*. Until 1968, most of us were completely wrapped up in a world of affairs and events. Since 1968, many of us have uncoupled from that world, exploring and expanding our own consciousness. Enough, already, of such non-integrated behavior. *Bayom hahu, bayom hazeh*, it is time for us to seek to become one, to bring our two worlds to bear on each other.

From stance to substance: Yes, I am afraid, I am filled with fear. I had supposed that we were entering a time when we might be permitted to concentrate on *Yerushalayim shel ma-alah*, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and here we are, once again, still, required to devote ourselves to *Yerushalayim shel matah*, the Earthly Jerusalem. I cannot depend on Israel's leadership to know what is right, yet who am I to know? And how, and where, am I to say what I may think I know? And how, and where, and to whom, shall I express my sometimes terrifying doubts?

I am afraid; I am also resentful. I resent the spokesmen of my community announcing, stridently, what is good for the Jews. I do not want

to be protected, nor to have my interests defined, by people whose own lives are devoid of Judaic experience and expression. Yet we persist in taking seriously the views of "important" people who patronize more than they protect. They seek to make it possible for Jews to be Jews, yet do nothing to pursue that possibility in their own lives, to expand their own base of experience, whether through study, or celebration, or any of the diverse paths of entry and exploration which the rest of us have begun to walk. We do not know, we can only guess, whether *détente* is, or is not, good for the Jews. How seriously can we take the pronouncements on issues such as this by people who have never understood that Shabbat is, beyond question, good for the Jews? Is the Jewish public interest likely to be well-defined by people whose private interests are wholly secular?

I am afraid, I am resentful, but most of all, I am hopeful. Something important has been happening these past several years, and the upshot is that we have bought ourselves a new generation of time. I used to think that mine was the last dependable generation, but now I know better. There is a generation coming up fast behind mine, and there is a new appetite for Judaism that crosses generational boundaries, and there is a chance, at last, that we can fashion here a community of quality that will move far beyond the minimal survival which most of us would have settled for a decade ago. Such a community can tolerate serious debate, perhaps even requires it.

The preceding three paragraphs imply my present agenda of primary concern. Specifically: While the defense of the State of Israel remains our highest priority, we need now to develop new understandings of our relationship to the State, understandings which will lead towards the development of a more genuine and equal partnership in responsibility. We can no longer use emergency as our alibi; emergency is, evidently, our permanent condition. Then: We need to think harder about our own leadership and the manner of its selection. I am skeptical about the possibility of "democratizing" the American Jewish community, but I do think we can, and should, move towards the development of countervailing centers of power. Just as I believe that the public defenders of Judaism would do well to engage in more private exploration, I believe that those who have, until now, concentrated on *orekh hayyim*, on Judaism as a way of life, must now "go public," must no longer leave the definition of our external relations to others.

Finally: The question of whether the current resurgence of interest in Jewishness and Judaism is fad or fact depends on how we respond to it. If there is a new appetite, as I have no doubt there is, our capacity to nourish it more vigorously and creatively than we have will determine whether those who are hungry enter and eat at our table, or, in frustration, seek other and more sumptuous cuisine than we appear to

offer. Having learned, somewhat to our surprise, that Jews want to be Jews, after all, that a new generation is available to Judaism in ways not thought likely a while back, we now need to turn our attention to the tough work of restoring Judaic competence, of creating a generation with that competence.

From My Alienated Vantage

HENRY L. FEINGOLD

BEHIND THE ANXIOUS MONITORING FOR SIGNS OF anti-Semitism or a growth in the rate of intermarriage, behind the growing number of programs designed to bring Jews back to their Judaism lies the frightening realization among survivalists that American Jewry cannot continue on its present path and survive. We are in the midst of a desperate search to find some means to turn things around before it is too late.

Yet the temples are full. (at least on high holy days). The bitter internecine quarrels have partly subsided, there are yarmulkas aplenty in the hallowed halls of Columbia and Harvard, a Jew sits near the highest source of power, the most recent UJA drive surpassed even that of the '67 war. Are not our wall-to-wall carpeted lives more comfortable and secure than ever? If everything is so good, then how could everything be so bad?

One of the great strengths of both American and Jewish culture is its affirmation of life. Both assume that progress can be made, that there is cause for hope. But, subject to a double dose of hope, it sometimes seems as if American Jews cannot fathom the reality of their position. While we lose vitality we are subject to a euphoric spirit and surrounded by programs we image will improve our condition. In fact, the seventies witness the convergence and culmination of trends in American Jewish development which give little cause for joy. We yearn for facts to tell us that it is not so, but the trend to nominal affiliation rather than commitment becomes clearer every year. It is especially apparent among our best minds in the professions and in the universities. It is these deracinated Jews who often serve as models and opinion leaders

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for the over 88% of Jewish youngsters who attend the nation's colleges. True, the current vogue for ethnicity has awakened some interest, but close scrutiny indicates that it contains little that is authentically Jewish and much that is merely sentimental. The basic thrust for modern American Jewry continues to be towards ever more modernism and Americanism. Jewishness survives to the extent that it can make itself compatible with these drives. That is to say, that the several religious modalities which have been developed to reconcile modernism and Judaism have successfully stabilized the situation for one or two generations. But by the third there is enough cause to wonder whether there is enough viability left by the transaction to insure the on-goingness of Judaism.

The problem emerges most clearly in the case of intermarriage. As Jews become more American they also become more acceptable as mates. We do not know precisely what the rate is and we hope that the loss is partly offset by in-marriages, but we can foresee a proportional demographic decline. That other product of modernism—contraception—also has an impact on the population curve. Jews are its earliest and most efficient practitioners, and if the current trends are projected into the future, American Jewry will bear the same relation to the general community as the minuscule colonial Jewry bore to colonial America. The demographic vitality we gained as a result of the arrival of the Jews of east Europe will have been totally dissipated. In the demographic sense, the vitality of American Jewry may indirectly become the last victim of the Holocaust. That is so because Polish Jewry, whose overproduction might have served to fill our demographic and cultural gap, no longer exists. It is almost as if this good and benevolent country has hit upon a formula which achieves, by absorption, what Nazi Germany could not achieve by extrusion and annihilation.

One wants to believe that such an absorption is not imminent, that there is still time for renewal. We look anxiously for signs of life and find them in the growth of the *Havurot* and of Jewish studies programs in the nation's colleges, the health of the Jewish day school movement and the functioning of our rich organizational and congregational infrastructure. Are we not stronger and better than ever before? Yet each of these islands of hope is not as healthy as appears on the surface. There is a growing blandness to Jewish life in America. Thus, while the quarrels between the various elements which compose American Jewry have subsided so, too, has a passionate concern about the fate of the Jews. One almost wishes for a return to the days when American Israel was a quarrelsome and divided tribe. At least, then there was a passionate concern to find the right path. One can scarcely detect that in Jewish organizations today. Their specific relationship to Jewish on-goingness is often hidden by other issues such as separation of church and state

and civil rights which, while important, have little meaning if we are not going to be.

We have made an extraordinary spiritual and financial investment in Israel. In one sense, Israel is our baby, its fate inextricably linked to our own. For many secular Jews it serves as the one remaining link to Judaism, since it serves as living proof that Judaism can be secular and modern and that Jews can win. Yet what can we hope for when we have just experienced the fourth in a series of costly wars which threaten to recur periodically until the end of the century? Who would have imagined, in 1948, that a quarter of a century later we would still be preoccupied with the initial problem of the state's survival? We seem hardly to have moved from first base. Rather than being the long awaited agent in our own renaissance, Israel becomes a source of perpetual anxiety in much the same way as the fate of Polish and, ultimately, European Jewry was before the war. Like that Jewish community, Israel is vulnerable and dependent, in the last analysis, on a spirit we used to call "civilization" during the bitter years of the Holocaust. (The "civilized" world would never allow this to happen, we used to imagine.) The Yom Kippur war serves to remind us that if the spirit ever existed in the world, Jews were somehow exempt from it. It works partly for victims of natural disasters and perhaps for Biafrans, Bengalis and Cuban refugees—but not for Jews. In the end, it all depends on ourselves in America and yet we, too, are desperately in need of spirit to fulfill our mission.

My friends and colleagues tell me that I am too pessimistic and I, in my turn, hope that they are right. I want to believe that deep in the inner recesses of American Jewry there exists an untapped reservoir of strength which I cannot perceive from my alienated vantage. The situation, I am informed, is not more hopeless today than it has been in other periods of Jewish history. If anything, things are somewhat more hopeful today than, let us say, in Spain in 1492 or Europe during the Holocaust. At least now Jews can take up arms and defend themselves. The Jewish enterprise has always been carried forward by the few and they do exist in America. They argue, and I want to believe them, that there is even something worthwhile which emerges from the indefinite results of the October war. In the sense that Israel is compelled to come to grips with its real power situation she will have somehow to negotiate and compromise with power in much the same way that Jews of the diaspora have always been forced to. The gap of understanding between Israel and the *galut* will be narrowed. As it becomes apparent that neither Jewry is destined for a "normal" existence, Israelis will stop thinking about the abnormality of Jewish development in the diaspora. We might even reach a point where we reconcile ourselves to our abnormality and draw sustenance from it. In the sense that the war informs

Israel that abnormality is the normal position for Jews it has been re-judaized.

We come back full-cycle to the condition of American Jewry on whom so much depends. I would like to believe that its vitality is not declining but, rather, assuming different forms. There have, after all, developed since the Emancipation (and even before) innumerable new ways to express one's Jewishness. If a trip to Israel or a weekend at Grossinger's have become *de rigueur* for a certain type of American Jew, who is to say that these are not worthy expressions of their Judaism. Marx Nordau's *bauch Juden* notwithstanding, such Jews, one might argue, are, after all, better than no Jews at all. But I am unconvinced.

The problem with placing other things at the center of our Judaism—Jewish peoplehood, Israel, liberalism or gefilte fish—rather than God, Torah and even halakhah, is that the result is sterility. We Jews of modernity are no longer capable of reproducing the culture. Modernity diminishes our ability to believe and to follow. That is the dilemma of the thousands of modern secular Jews like myself. We are caught bewixt and between. After the Holocaust and the Yom Kippur war we suspect that modernity's answer to the "Jewish question" is inadequate. But we have imbibed so deeply of its spirit that we cannot abandon it completely. I suspect that many of the well-educated secular Jews are ready to return to some traditional form of Judaism, but finding a viable new synthesis which allows us to do so while retaining those things of the modern secular spirit we think are worthwhile is problematic. Developing such synthesis may be part of the answer for the future of American Jewry.

Answers to Some of the Questions

EGAL FELDMAN

I. TO THE DEGREE THAT THE WORLD'S GREAT religions take cognizance of Judaism, shape attitudes towards it, to that extent do they arrest my attention. I take personal pride in Judaism's contribution to the foundations of religious thought, but am forever conscious that though this gift to the nations has been acknowledged in theory, in practice Jews have been eternally penalized in spite, and even because, of it. In the face of the Holy See's persistent refusal to offer

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diplomatic recognition to the State of Israel, Protestant coolness to Israel's repeated crises, and King Feisal's recent ravings about expelling Jews from Jerusalem, the knowledge that both Christianity and Islam owe their origins and substance to the Jewish Biblical traditions is interesting, but hardly of any practical value. History forces me to view Judaism as a social experience as well as a theological one. When I think of Judaism, I focus as much on Torah as upon its efforts to accommodate itself to surrounding hostilities and humiliations and its struggles to outlive destructive outbursts.

2. Israel and the Middle-East crisis dominates my view of contemporary Jewish life. A Judaism without Israel today I would find anemic and colorless. Most important, however, is the knowledge that Israel, the torso of contemporary Jewish civilization, stands naked and exposed to enemies, in a cold and indifferent world. Should I turn my head from its plight, indulge myself in a Judaism without Israel, then I acknowledge the Arabs' pernicious thesis that Zionism and Judaism must be viewed in separate compartments. Israel, therefore, must continue to remain foremost in my thinking. Perhaps some day, I hope soon, the State of Israel will find a degree of security and acceptance in the family of "civilized" nations. Then, perhaps, I will have time to reassess and reorder my values about what is most meaningful in Judaism. But this is a luxurious dream which I cannot afford to indulge in at the moment.

3. The relations of Jews and Arabs constitute the crux and pivot of the Jewish crisis today. The Arabs, like other villains in Jewish history—Crusaders, Spanish Inquisitors, the Tsars of Russia, the Nazis—to name a few of the more conspicuous—stand ready to inflict injury, death and destruction upon the Jewish people. I view the relationship between Arab and Jew, therefore, as one between villain and innocent victim. I believe that if I accept the Arab as anything less than a modern Haman, I will be wallowing in a luxurious bath of self-deception. This, of course, does not mean that all Arabs are evil and ready to inflict damage upon the Jews. But neither were all Christians in the eleventh century, Spaniards in the fifteenth century, Russians in the nineteenth century, or even Germans in the twentieth. What is significant in each of these cases is that the social, political and religious leadership set the tone of irrational fanaticism in which all the "good" people acquiesced or, at best, ignored. To the suggestion that the Arab is a poor, neglected and exploited human being who is merely striking out at what he erroneously believes to be a threat to his existence, my comment can only be that this is not the first Jewish catastrophe which grew out of human poverty, stupidity or miscalculation. In any case, it surely does not justify or minimize the potential danger that the modern Arab represents to Jewish existence.

4. Much will depend upon conditions in the Middle-East. Continued

crises will condition, and even determine, the direction of American-Jewish energy—financial, political and intellectual. At the same time, however, future generations will proceed without the impact of key historic influences previously operative in American-Jewish life. The Old World background, especially the legacy of East-European *Yiddishkeit*, *shtetl* memories and customs, are already fading into a misty, unreal past. The nightmarish recollection of the Holocaust will also dim as it increasingly becomes part of the Jewish historic, rather than personal, memory. Students are already earning credit for studying Holocaust History! The birth of the State of Israel will also be viewed increasingly in historic terms, not as the modern miracle; its existence will be taken for granted. At the same time, American attentiveness to the needs of neglected minorities, its accommodation to the issues of neo-pluralism, multi-culturalism and ethnic diversity, might well result in the strengthening of Jewish communal bonds in America. Future generations might well discover a new compatability in Jewish identification, as well as new opportunities in colleges and universities to explore their heritage more deeply.

5. The problem is two-fold, involved, on one hand, with the reconciliation of what is most meaningful in a Jewish existence with America's open and relatively free society, and reconciling it, on the other hand, with America's international and diplomatic responsibilities. The first side of this coin—how to support a viable Jewish life in the face of the multitudinous opportunities, pressures and temptations—is not new. One need only observe the continuing rate of inter-marriage or the skimpy allocations directed towards Jewish education, to understand the neglect of some priorities in the American Jewish community. But there is another side to the coin, a relatively new dimension to the American Jewish problem, which stems from the role of the State of Israel in the world community. American Jews assume the responsibility of reacting in a political way to issues which affect that Jewish State. Fortunately, the interests of Israel, i.e., its security, have been compatible with those of the United States. There is also considerable indication that such a compatibility will continue in the future, but, of course, there is no guarantee. America's foreign policy, like all foreign policies, is guided by self-interest. Israel is a small state, and a small state is characterized by a high degree of dispensibility. Taiwan was not the first country to be sold for a mess of political pottage. Are American Jews prepared to reconcile their international (Israeli) self-interest as Jews with their obligations as citizens to support their country's diplomatic objectives, in the event that such interests clash? Although I recognize that such a question offers grist for the mills of anti-Semites forever searching for signs of Jewish unpatriotic behavior, I raise it, nevertheless, in the belief that it is a problem which thoughtful Jews might have to face in the future.

Obsession With History

FREDERICK GARBER

THE JEW, WHETHER SECULAR OR OBSERVANT, appears to be obsessed with history. However concerned he may be with the possibilities of mystic exaltation, the Jew emerges from a religious framework that began with God's agreement to stay close, here in this world, to the interests of a specific group of people—so close, indeed, that the Divine Presence is said to have shared in all that has happened to that people, their exile as well as their sufferings and eventual glory. Even now, and to a secular Jew like myself, the conception of the co-exile of the Shekhinah seems an extraordinary flight of the spirit, a daring statement to make and to believe. Of all its potential implications I am especially fascinated by its assertion of the importance of palpable reality, whether historically antecedent or immediately present; after all, one can hardly shrug off all the facts around us when the Divine Spirit has agreed to share in our human experience. For most Jews, lived Judaism is remarkable for its lack of abstractness. Hasidic joy is an exuberance about present things.

Where I stand now, that obsession with history is at least as intense and significant as it has ever been, but there are peculiarities about the immediate situation which give it an unprecedented character. We all know the reasons. A generation ago the rank smoke of burned Jews infected us, and still does; and a few years later (though not, perhaps, in a neat causal relationship) there was an Israel again, long overdue and—to no surprise—not welcomed by many. About the first event, I can only say that if it had *not* caused either a reshuffling of Jewish values or at least forced a consideration that they might need to be reshuffled, we would be appallingly dense in spirit. For some, the extent of the event's grossness has proven all previous categories of value insufficient, and nothing, it would seem, has come forth that is capable of containing that grossness. For myself, I would not want to face a category that could contain it. Still, Judaism stands now at the point where the old and the unforeseeable have to find a way of living together. We can say that such a conjunction requires a new language, and it does. Yet that language has to permit access to permanent values about man—particularly, though not exclusively, Jewish man—and, for the religious, about God's work in immediate Jewish history. We have to work again at the relation of history and value, finding a place for the unprecedented, though not necessarily an explanation for it. That is to say, we must find

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a context for that which many feel has caused an absolute rupture in the historical process. The paradoxes only emphasize the difficulties; they do not cancel out our need to encounter them.

At the same time, that urgent command not to ignore the present, the immediacy which the Divine Spirit has always shared with Jews, leads to another difficult balancing act in relation to the Holocaust, values, history and the immediate moment. Only now, after a generation, does it seem at least *possible* to think about those events with any kind of perspective, however fragmentary and necessarily imperfect. We are probably just now beginning to see them as a whole, which is not to say that we can now see them clearly or that we ever will. Yet there are contrary impulses which, though they do not negate that new perspective or even qualify it, complicate it considerably. Recently, after I delivered a lecture on Nelly Sachs, one of my listeners pleaded movingly and persuasively for the need to focus our moral resources on the difficulties of the present. She spoke for many, and for part of myself. The past begs for comprehension and the present for action. Somehow, it has to be possible to give full due to both. Tentatively, but surely, we ought to be looking for ways to keep the unforgettable in view, to take advantage, however uncertainly, of any possibilities for perspective. But our moral resources also have to be used to clarify immediate actions such as the events in Russia and the Middle East, and, as far as possible, to shape these events for the immediate benefit of the Jews involved.

To put it another way, I find myself uneasy with phrases such as "the Jewish experience," since such words have the air of abstraction which I find inimical to my understanding of Judaism and Jewish history. The Jewish experience, or Jewishness, is, first and last of all, the experience that each individual Jew has in being a Jew, whatever he does with that experience. In each Jew the whole past meets the individual in his moment, and his necessarily unique and special experience contributes to the meaning of that meeting. Other Jews, as idiosyncratic as each one of us, themselves equally the meeting point of history and immediacy, are at this moment in difficulties for no other reason than their Jewishness. Emil Fackenheim has written eloquently on the *mizvah* to forbid Hitler another victory by remembering the past and trying to find a place for it in the totality of Jewish history and consciousness. Though my own instincts are secular, I feel that the commandment must be accepted, and for more reasons than any of us can articulate. But it has to be combined with the duties of present Jews to present Jews, in Russia and Israel and wherever else the inevitable resurgence of persecution will find Jews suffering because of their Jewishness. One need hardly be paranoid to agree with George Steiner and others that all Jews are in exile, not necessarily in the traditional theological sense but simply (!) because they are what they are. Most Jews seem tired

of being archetypes, but it is unlikely that they will ever be anything else.

Of course, there is Israel, and to that extent—though it is a qualified one—exile can be overcome. But it is difficult to speak of the transcendence of exile when the country is now, itself, as isolated as any medieval ghetto. The ironies are immense: we still hear comments about Jewish exclusiveness and the self-righteousness of the Israelis, at the same time as the politics promoted by those commentators makes it impossible for the Israelis to be anything else. From the American perspective certain positions seem feasible. Though the survival of the Jewish people as a continuing group is not necessarily tied to the fate of Israel, the survival of that country as the focus of Jewry is an unconditional absolute to which every American Jew, of any congregation or none, has to commit himself. Nothing less than absoluteness can be acceptable. There is some delicate work to be done through American politics, since it is obvious that the American people are greatly in favor of the continuance of Israel but that there is a point, the embarkation of troops, to which they will not go. We will have to do all that we can to keep public affairs from reaching the situation where troops would be the only answer. It is doubtful whether any future American president could send soldiers to the Middle East as easily as Johnson dispatched the Marines to Lebanon. Personally, we shall have to persuade through writing and talking, though we need to go outside of the community, where few need to be convinced, and preach to the semi-converted who are neither indifferent nor fully committed to what is essentially not their private business. The problems of the American Jewish community seem to me both clear and relatively inconsiderable, compared to those of Israel, though there is a potential for the resurgence of anti-Semitism which has to be watched carefully. As for the drifting away that we hear so much about, it is possibly no more nor less than it has always been, and, in any case, it is certainly not so immediate a crisis as the survival, probable though not inevitable, of the state of Israel itself.

Given that survival, and with Israel as a stimulating universal focus, there is a good chance for the emergence of an imagination that would be demonstrably, though not exclusively, Jewish, something more complex and exploratory than the mixed bag of fiction about established and unsettled Jews that came out of America in the fifties. It is difficult to guess at the contours of what might come. One can hope that it would bring the context of historical Jewish value into an intense examination of modernity, that the context would transcend parochialism (though not Judaism) and transmute the experience of the Jewish consciousness into hard thinking and high art. With luck, it could approach in quality those great years of Central European humanism, particularly in the first third of this century, when secular Jewish minds as different as

Kafka and Walter Benjamin took much of their sense of the experience of being a Jew into pivotal areas of the modern imagination. Those minds are exemplary in their diversity as well as in their emergence from a Jewish consciousness. More of the same would be a universal boon.

Being Jewish In An Ice Age

HERBERT GOLD

1. RELIGION I DEFINE AS A PERSON'S DEEPEST principles of understanding and Judaism is mine. My understanding comes from history, and to be Jewish is the most persistent fact of my history. I didn't know this during the early part of my life, when ambition, work, love, fun, marriage, fatherhood, and all the distractions of an American—war, disappointment, illness, success and failure—seemed to fill the years. Those are still lively, ambiguous presences. They now have both a structure and an atmosphere in time. Loyalty to my own past and the glories and suffering of the past of my fathers give me my best hope for the future.

2. Israel has become an essential part of my life as a Jew. Its secularity joins my own secularity, a will to survive in the world which is. Its religious incentive is one I honor more than any other, although I practice few ceremonies and obey fewer of the ancient laws. I believe the tradition of Judaism would die if the State of Israel perished. I can no longer imagine a world without Israel. This specific instance of hope, love, sacrifice, and survival is essential.

3. About Jewish-Arab relations, I look—doesn't everyone?—for peace and accommodation. I would like to treasure the Arab people as valued neighbors. No more war. But war if necessary.

4. Jewish life in America needs a ripening and turning of the tradition. Clearly, intermarriage and a flagging of observance cannot be countered by handsomer suburban Jewish centers, Hadassah bricks and tax-deductible auditoriums or Maccabee gym equipment. I am not qualified to instruct others in faith. But if America and Israel both survive,

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I believe that the continuing vitality of the Jewish people will keep the group, in some way, intact. The Diaspora, of which we are a part, is invigorated by the risks of Israel. The courage and agony of Soviet Jewry should tell us something about the persistence of history. (It would be better if we didn't still need to be told.) The universalist dream of the melting pot has been blown away by the winds. Jews are here for another while.

5. My ritual observances are stimulated less by faith, nostalgia, and the tradition than by personal need to have my half-Jewish children know what their father—therefore, they themselves—comes from. I light the candles. I tell the stories. Sometimes I recite the prayers, and not very well. Perhaps I wouldn't find this necessary if my new children had a Jewish mother. How do I really express myself as a Jew? I write what I know. Particularly I have tried to say it in two books, *Fathers* and *My Last Two Thousand Years*.

6. The major problem confronting the Jewish community is the health and survival of Israel. If our brothers and cousins perish, we perish. All the other issues can drift along to their imperfect and temporary compromise, but the Holocaust cannot be repeated. It's true that the emphasis I give this now comes out of my recent visits to Israel, especially during the war of October 1973.

7. The major issues confronting the United States? At present, recovery from the sounds of the wars of Southeast Asia, of a lack of self-respect, of the corruptions of technique, of the recent failures of the democratic forms to bring forth a decent government. American Jews share the general malaise, but because they are not so fully implicated, are not so necessarily imprisoned in "Americanism," may be able to contribute more than their share to an American revival. Though this has been a critical, and even tragic, time for America, we have not reached the end of the line. The threat of world war seems to be diminished—we forget the ice age of the Cold War—and perhaps the United States has a chance of revival which is hidden by the shames of the recent past and the bitterness of a corroded politics. The bath of crisis may both sear and cleanse us. This happened before in history; Jews, especially, can remember, and perhaps, therefore, have something further to teach their fellow Americans.

Meaning Needed

PERCIVAL GOODMAN

RECENTLY I RECEIVED A LETTER RESPONDING TO comments on a new building program which, I think, represents the feelings of many Jews who are concerned with the future of the synagogue in the United States.

"What," the respondent asks, "is the prospect for congregational survival? Memberships are dwindling and members getting older, demographic studies show no new members by immigration. Sons and daughters of the congregational family are not attracted."

Attendance at services, he points out, is steadily dwindling, not only on Friday night and Saturday morning but even at High Holy Days. "You will say as I have said to myself: but *you* don't attend services, why should others. That is the question, isn't it? Why do I (and most of the other Board members) feel no need or desire to attend services? Why do I feel the prospect so unattractive that I no longer attend at all, save on special occasions such as *Yahrzeit*?"

"I find that as a result of the population movement, the school attendance is lower than 1955 and shows every evidence of further decline." In addition, "We face the sociological question—whether we expect most of our students to remain through confirmation."

If these remarks are typical, and I think they are, something is terribly wrong, for it is my experience that many, especially the young, are staying away from the synagogue not because they have become more materialistic but because they are less so. They are asking for inspiration and being given sermons on Golda Meir or the latest novel. Sitting in rows as in a theatre, they don't get much help from listening to cantors intoning words they don't understand in musical modes they find foreign. They don't get much help from services where the sole participants are the officiants and the occasional bar mizvah boy (whose deepest prayer is "O Lord let it be over"). They don't get much help when, as a congregant, their sole function is to get up, sit down and read responses when directed.

Since the end of the 2nd world war, I've designed half a hundred synagogue buildings for communities in 13 states. With few exceptions, the lay persons sponsoring these projects have not been observant. When asked "Why, then, do you do it," the answers were, a) for the children or b) because my mother (or father) would have liked it, or c) it's a philanthropic enterprise like another.

This lukewarm, surrogate kind of commitment, I believe, is bearing its sour fruit.

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Books and Readers: Jewish Self-Expression

IRVING HALPERIN

I ESPECIALLY EXPRESS MYSELF AS A JEW WHEN teaching the literature written by Jews. What pleasure it is to share one's interpretations of books with interested and interesting fellow Jews! We engage one another through the books, through what we bring to them and through how they read us. We come to books like pilgrims standing before a new city, looking forward to what may be revealed inside the gates; pilgrims seeking knowledge and respecting excellence. We read in the belief that certain books can provide us with not *the* way but rather *a* way of probing the human condition in general and our Jewish identity in particular. The books bring us together.

Communion. Sometimes it is as though we were praying together, speaking to one another in a communal voice. Perhaps I delude myself, but in those moments a warm, generous light seems to be in our eyes.

The location, the geography, changes—but always the quality of the people in the class and the congenial atmosphere are the same. This year, one evening a week, the place is Temple Isaiah in Lafayette, California, some thirty miles from my home in San Francisco. Never mind the rather lengthy commute or that the meetings are after my long day at San Francisco State University; I fly to Temple Isaiah on winged tires—the students there will not believe how much I look forward to seeing them each week. We meet in the lovely Sanctuary; its quiet strength encloses us, securely. The course is entitled the American Jewish Writer.

Most of the students are in their thirties and forties. What are some occupations of the adult students? Physicians, lawyers, teachers, business men and women. . . . Intelligent, alert, they are convinced that the alternative to an informed Jewish existence is spiritual suicide. They do not want instant answers to some questions—e.g., in what ways shall one “choose life”?; for they would agree with Elie Wiesel that “The essence of a man is to be a question, and the essence of the question is to be without an answer.”

For two hours a rich orchestration of mind and sensibility, consciousness and feeling. Sometimes we get quite excited. Because their minds are quick and lively, there is no scarcity of laughter, wit. Somber, disquieting moments, too, as when we are discussing the Holocaust. Thus, a mixture of expression by Jewish writers and readers; laughter that is often close to tears—the kind of mixture that, eschewing absolutistic standards, Saul Bellow espouses in his introduction to *Great Jewish Short*

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Stories. "We make what we can of our condition and the means available. We must accept the mixture as we find it—the impunity of it, the tragedy and the hope of it."

Sometimes, tunneling back to the early 1900's, we excavate the literary past, reclaiming the fading works of Mary Antin, Anzia Yezierska, Abraham Cahan. More often, we are moving forward in time to consider Lewisohn, Henry Roth, Mike Gold, Odets, Levin, Miller, Wallant, Rosenfeld, Bellow, Kazin, Howe, Fiedler, Malamud, Philip Roth, Schwartz, Shapiro, Feldman, Rukeyser, Kaufman, Simpson, Swados, Wilner, Litwak, Herbert Gold, Ozick, Olsen, Nissenson. And we track recurring themes: the search for Jewish identity; the conflict between heritage and assimilation; anti-Semitism; generational conflicts between fathers and sons; suffering as a way to a conversion of the heart; the traditional responsibility of Jews for one another. . . .

In examining, in giving homage to these writings, we are expressing our intense need for Jewish rootedness. We are discovering how we are peculiarly connected to one another as Jews. We are asking penetrating questions about the nature of Jewish experience, how it impinges on us differently from other kinds of experience and how it shapes the writings of American Jews. We are recognizing the validity of Alfred Kazin's statement that the Jewish writer, with his "natural interest in social fact," has been especially concerned to show "how superficial society can be, how pretentious, atrocious, unstable and—above all—comic." We are grasping the significance of Cynthia Ozick's contention that "the only way to have a Jewish literature is from *within* the Jewish community." In sum, we are endeavoring to find out what it is that a Jew represents; and we are Jacob-wrestling to become *more* of what we are as Jews.

There is a line in Theodore Roethke's poem, "The Waking": "I learn by going where I have to go." So, too, I "learn" of my Jewish identity by reading and teaching the works of certain authors who are seriously concerned with defining their own identities. This is where, at least for the time being, "I have to go."

As to other questions posed by this symposium—What do you regard as the major issue confronting the United States? What do you regard as the major problem confronting the Jewish community? What are your views on Jewish-Arab relations? What place does the State of Israel occupy in your scale of values?—I care; hence my membership on the National Executive Committee of the American Professors for Peace in the Middle East; the Board of Governors, American Jewish Congress, San Francisco; the Foreign Affairs Committee, American Jewish Committee, San Francisco, and Board of Directors, Hillel, San Francisco State University. But still, activism by itself is not enough; there is a time for manning the barricades and a time for books, for study.

The return to San Francisco is over freeway concrete. Driving, I hum

a tune. The lights of the approaching Bay Bridge are bright, the sky is calm and close. All is well. And if there are no giant menorahs or blue and white flags on the landscape, if the road does not lead up through the Judean hills to beloved Jerusalem, still, recalling the electricity and warmth of the past two hours, the good old-fashioned *mispaḥah* vibes of the class, I feel expressed-out, Jewishly.

I Am A Jewish Atheist

NAT HENTOFF

1. I HAVE BEEN AN ATHEIST SINCE ABOUT THE age of eight, and have not changed in that regard. However, it seems to me that there is an honorable lineage of atheists who also consider themselves Jews. I consider myself a Jewish atheist.

2. My "scale of values" is horizontal rather than vertical. That is, in terms of the values that mean most to me. On that horizontal scale are the Bill of Rights in this country, economic justice in this country, all kinds of justice in this country, and the preservation of the State of Israel. In personal terms, it is fortifying to know that there is a place to which I can go just because I am a Jew. I don't ever expect to move there, having spent so long a time trying to make democracy real in this country, but the existence of Israel does give me a sense of landed roots. Personal terms aside, it is vital that there continue to be a home, a homeland, for those Jews anywhere in the world who do want to leave wherever they are—for reasons of anti-Semitism, lack of freedom of expression, or for religious imperatives.

3. I think there have to *be* relations, other than by means of arms or by rhetoric in the United Nations and elsewhere. Granted the obduracy in this regard of some Arab heads of state at various times (lengthy tenure in office not being endemic to political leadership in most Arab nations) and granted the barbarous zealotry of some Arab "guerrillas," nonetheless I think, and have long thought, that Israel can be more forthcoming. I support an independent Palestinian state, for example, and I do not believe there can be any more or less lasting peace in the

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Middle East until such a state exists. I am aware of the complexities— intra-Palestinian and inter-Arab—of bringing such a state into being while preserving the nation of Israel, but I believe that Israeli leaders should address themselves seriously and continuously to setting up a dialogue with those Arabs and those Palestinians who will engage in such a dialogue. And absent a dialogue, Israel should at least indicate its acceptance of the concept and propose, however tentatively, some ways in which to implement the idea of an independent Palestinian state.

4. This I find a most difficult question, perhaps in part because I was brought up in the Orthodox Jewish tradition. I do not adhere to the rites and other obligations of that tradition, but I respect it; and in terms of the preservation of Judaism as a religion, an active religion, in this country, I do not find encouraging those statistics which indicate a growth in congregations and in children attending Sunday school at Reform synagogues. It is a bias of mine, but I find Reform Judaism so reformist, in most cases, as to be what jazz musicians used to call “jive.” A put-on of being religious, however unwittingly, that is the intention of the worshippers. I suppose the term I mean for Reform Judaism is “egregiously attenuated.”

There is more potential strength for the survival of Judaism as a religion in America in some Conservative congregations and, of course, in what is left of Orthodox Judaism. I am, to say the least, no expert on this, but I doubt if much of Orthodox Judaism will stand a century hence, except for the Hasidim and a few other sects. As for the future of my kind of Jew—an atheist, but with strong ties to what I consider to be Jewish values of morality and of justice, as well as with strong emotional ties both to Israel and to what I consider to be Jewish cultural values, from cantorial music to quite specific modes of Jewish wit—I am not especially sanguine. People like myself, from my observations, do not, in general, appear to have children who feel nearly so strongly about being Jewish as some of their parents do. The fault is that of the parents; the fault is mine. I have not, through the years, been explicit enough with my own children as to why I consider myself Jewish. The result is that of my four children, as of now, only one is likely to be even my kind of Jew when he is an adult. The others will not be scornful of Judaism but ignorant of it. My failings in this regard seem to me quite widespread, if not pervasive, among Jewish intellectuals of my generation.

In sum, Judaism will survive in quite varying degrees of strength and authenticity (both religious and atheistic Judaism), but I see no true renaissance of Judaism in America within any future I can foresee.

5. My only form of ritual observance has been—as of June, 1974,—attendance at the bar mizvah of my elder son. It is a bar mizvah which he insisted on having, compelled toward that decision, so far as I can tell, by having been much impressed by the stage version of *The Roth-*

schilds and the film version of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Culture need not be “high culture” to have substantive effects.

As for my forms of Jewish self-expression, it seems to me that everything I do, certainly including writing, is inexorably linked to my being Jewish—at least as I perceive what being Jewish is. I mean a point of view; a sense of what it is to be—and rather enjoy being, in this country anyway—a perpetual, partial outsider; and a sense, which I gained from my father and other Jewish adults when I was growing up, that to be Jewish is to be socially responsible, and not only to other Jews. There is also the sense of the legitimacy of dissents, inside and outside Judaism, no matter what the weight of “established” opinion. Not only the legitimacy of dissent but also the Jewish moral-cultural *mandate* to dissent when one feels it essential to keep oneself whole.

6. The major short-term problem confronting the American Jewish community (or communities) is the current severe and, I hope, not fundamental cleavage between many Jews and many other minorities in this country, principally Black Americans. Northern racism, as Dr. Kenneth Clark has often emphasized, is proving to be more devious, more hypocritical, more obscene in its wearing of righteous “liberal” masks, than much of Southern racism has been and continues to be. Illustrations are the controversies in New York City centering around Ocean Hill-Brownsville and the United Federation of Teachers, the Forest Hills public housing project and, most fundamentally, the position of most Jewish organizations throughout the country on the principle and the implementation of affirmative action programs. (The most crucial illustration of *that* division between most Jewish organizations, on the one hand, and all Black organizations, on the other hand, is the DeFunis case, which may have been decided by the Supreme Court by the time this issue of JUDAISM appears.

I could go on for many pages on this subject but, in essence, I believe that many Jews do not yet recognize their own residue of racism. Furthermore, while I do not consider all Jews racist who disagree with me on what I consider a retreat by Jewish organizations with regard to civil rights, I am appalled at the apparent inability by many Jews to even try to understand what it is that Blacks and other minorities want, and surely should have, if there is indeed to be a true beginning—for them—of equality of opportunity in America. To reduce the already thorny question of affirmative action programs (including admissions to law schools) to the crude, simplistic charge of “quotas” is to abdicate both conscience and intelligence in deference to woefully unexplored fears.

In the *long run*, the major problem confronting the Jewish communities in America is how many of our children and our children's children will be Jews. As I indicated in the previous answer, I have no

clear sense of what the answer to that problem is going to be, but I am not particularly optimistic.

7. The major issue confronting the United States? There are many, and there is no space for me even just to list them all.

Among them, however, are:

Will we continue to be two nations, one of them constituting the poor, among them many Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, etc.?

Will the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution itself, survive in spirit and force, as well as in letter? (Consider the current composition of the Supreme Court.) Will the United States finally learn that to spend more than \$80 billion a year on "defense" is to exacerbate, not reduce, world tensions and is also a wholly immoral waste of funds so desperately needed by members of our second nation at home? And will there be again—for *masses* of people—real chances for upward mobility in America, or will current class and economic stratifications harden even more, with yet another elite coming into power: the technocrats, the managers of systems?

Or, as Paul Goodman used to put it, are we going to be a nation of people or of personnel?

A Private Mystique

JOHN HOLLANDER

1. IT IS DIFFICULT TO CHARACTERIZE MY "OUT-look on religion in general and Judaism in particular." As a literary scholar, I must deal continually with the consequences of Christianity in English and American poetry; but as an American middle-class Jew of academic background, I live with a private mystique which reserves the term "religion" for American Protestantism in its various Christian and post-Christian sects and phases. Orthodox Christianity I see as something else, something prior to "religion." Jewish observance I somehow cannot consider "religion" at all, perhaps because of its seamless relation to the rest of life, perhaps in some measure because when I was acquiring my comfy, secular humanist ideology in college, learning that the churches were inimical to freedom, progress, self-fulfillment, the Imagination and

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so forth, I was always making an unavowed exception of the "religious" observance I had largely abandoned. As a poet, locked always in a wrestling match with a protean angel named Tradition, I dare say that I have chosen (I almost *feel* chosen *by*, but feelings are fatuous) an alternative, if not an antithesis, to religion. But this reflects American post-romantic tradition in poetry, and in this I feel at one with my Gentile contemporaries in the art. It would be wrong to attribute my lack of formal Jewish observance to this, even if my private fancy that Judaism (whether Orthodox, antinomian, or even—*pace* my snobberies—Reformed, which still seems the best candidate for crypto-Protestant status) is something more and less than "religion," turns out to be unhelpfully precious. As a youthful Jacobin, I could snarl away at the churches without regard to the way in which they may have helped keep millions of sad, dull, wretched people out of harmful mischief. I no longer feel that I quite have that luxury, although I regard the so-called religious revival in America with distrust and distaste. The counter-culture was an odious phase of it, although there is a historical irony of the spectacle of the liberal churches falling all over each other to claim drugs, sexual amorphousness, instancy of achievement and so forth as their own—the counter-culture is really quite normative in America, at least from Mary Baker Eddy and Joseph Smith on. I hope that the signs of a "religious revival" in Judaism—*The Whole Earth Shulhan Arukh* and so forth—are not part of this, really, but stem from a more authentic Jewish desperation currently appearing among the most assimilated.

2. I do not now, nor, alas, will I have soon, the luxury of the kind of speculation about Israel's importance in which I indulged occasionally prior to 1967. The survival of the State of Israel seems to me a grim necessity, and while I suppose that I should like some day to see it as part of a middle-eastern confederation of some sort, there appears to be little hope for that in the near future. It must stay alive and intact, and it must not be totally transformed by its own, and by our, mandate for its survival into a kind of withered, Spartan sphere of intransigence. About what the State of Israel ultimately means to me, I still wonder: is it really (I dare not say "merely") part of the Diaspora in all but an ironic geographical sense? Does it exist in order that *l'shanah haba-ah* may be fulfilled by a tourist visit? Or what if it is something more, perhaps even a nightmare of something more—an eschatological state whose tremendous importance might become apparent only in the way in which its destruction might lead to planetary warfare? The character of the country may have to change, and I hope it will not be for the worse. Meanwhile, nobody will, in all probability, be able to convince me that a binational secular Palestinian state would be more pleasant, humane, secular or stable than Northern Ireland. I suppose I might add that I have never visited Israel, primarily because of the expense (I have never

had the good luck to be sent on a junket) and because I felt it would always be there to see eventually. As I wrote the last sentence, I fear that I shuddered a bit.

3. I cannot say much about Jewish-Arab relations, save that I wish they were better. I have never lived in Israel, and I have known very few Arabs. Anything I said would be exceedingly uninformed, and shaped only by the buffeting of ideological winds, e.g., Israeli hawks and doves impress me equally with their candor, sincerity, knowledgeability and sophistication. I have no idea who is right, although my visceral reactions are all, unfortunately, hawkish.

4. Jewish life in America may be profoundly affected by the undeniable fact that anti-Semitism, after a twenty-five year moratorium, is no longer considered to be in bad taste. I suppose that the Holocaust bought that moratorium (it seems obscene even to think of it as a price), but we may all live to see the time when the name of Treblinka registers in America the way that Musa Dagħ does today. But I cannot now plot what the effects will be, on observance, the nature of Jewish communities, etc. Culturally speaking, the heyday of the stand-up comics of Jewish *Selbsthass* may be at an end. That would be all right.

5. My "forms of self-expression" in general are my teaching and my writing. The first of these is strongly shaped by my sense, not only of necessary historical and analytic skills, but of membership in a tradition of expounding poetic texts, major and minor fictions. My private sense of the nature of that secular, academic tradition engages Jewish tradition at many points. This is not only a matter of manifest content (and I am trying continually to extend my knowledge, particularly of Midrash), Biblical interpretation, etc. It also touches on the model of tradition, a pattern of revelation and interpretation, which underlies my sense both of teaching and of the history of literature. As far as my poetry is concerned, "Jewish self-expression" is a more complicated matter. A naturalistic, satiric or comic novelist, or a Chekhovian sort of playwright, can easily "express" his Jewish identity by his milieu and subjects or, less crudely, by his conventional tones of scepticism or momentary breathlessness, for example. A poet is not a chronicler, nor an ideologue, nor a satirist (save with his left hand), but a mythmaker and a mythographer, a collapsed (rather than fallen) form of minor prophet, whose vision is no longer of the future of a People, but of a Self. As a Jewish poet, the stream of tradition from which I drink must be agghadic, rather than halakhic; also, the Muse being what she is, I must, I suppose, always be in danger of false worship. I should probably be very cross with anyone who tried glibly to characterize "Jewish content" in true poetry, but I dare say that such a person would find more and more of it in mine in the past few years. Some of it is submerged—I feel almost marranistic about this, as if I were hiding a candle in a pitcher

—because my primary poetic contract must needs be with the English language, and the American poetic tradition. I am not trying to write a sub-genre of Jewish poetry, but a poetry which, being mine, would have to reflect my earliest encounters with awe, ceremony, the magic of language half-understood, alternatives as to the received world and its history, and the idea of a text before which reason might dance in wonder. All of these are Judaistic. As far as ritual observance is concerned, I abandoned it when I left my parents' house many years ago. I conduct a familial Seder once a year. I am available for a minyan, but do not seek one.

Judaism: Stronger and More Lasting Than Other Religions

LOTHAR KAHN

1. RELIGION, WHICH WAS ONCE CENTRAL TO living, will continue to move toward the periphery. For vast numbers of people it is even now in the nature of the superficial and accidental and, perhaps, wholly dispensable. I am not forecasting the early demise of the religions. Periodic outings to a favorite church and synagogue will remain a pleasant social ritual, a vague concession to "oughtness," an aspect of manners more than of meaning. Yet the religions are likely to retain a measure of significance in areas relating to the most personal and inexplicable parts of self and the mysteries of nature. Since the inexplicable seems to be shrinking, along with the secrets of nature—death will constitute the last frontier—the significance of religion is likely to dwindle with time.

Despite this gloomy prophecy, I do not exclude the strong possibility of religious revivals which could even occur repeatedly, but over the long haul they may represent only brief remissions in what now appears an irreversible decline.

Judaism is a religion and, as such, cannot escape this trend. Yet it is also more than a religion and this "more" may serve as a shield for the religious core. Am I wrong in thinking that religion, culture and nationality, so intertwined in Judaism, have often been protective of

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(and sometimes threatening to) one another? Then, too, there is always the strong possibility that the non-Jewish world will manage to inject a deep fear, consolidative in its effect, into the Jewish heart. And, finally, my own brand of mystery and wonder at Jewish survival is such that I think Judaism, because of its particular complex nature and history, may prove a bit stronger and more lasting than other religions.

2. While I have never heard the call of Zion, I have always recognized the imperative for a Jewish homeland. The whole Diaspora history of flight and resettlement and, especially, the period since 1933, have underscored the impossible obscenity of Jews ever having to knock on closed doors again—and be refused admittance. I recall how, in my own youth, my family were cast out from their native land, were granted temporary residence in a neighboring country—only to be arbitrarily deported the next day—and how for one year they tried one means after another to find a permanent home. Israel represents, to me, a haven for the oppressed and I feel intensively grateful for its existence. During my one visit to Israel, I was moved by the notion of being in a predominantly Jewish land in which I could drop the defensive pretenses and stances I had learned in my youth—and have not been able to discard entirely at any time since. I was also impressed and awed by a splendid record of building against a backdrop of chronic war and an unfriendly soil. I cannot say in all truthfulness that I was enamored of the cockiness, aggressiveness, and general incivility of many of the people. But I understood the whys and wherefores. I wish Israel well. I support her with my money and my good will and, were a catastrophe to befall the young nation, it would be for me a jarring and devastating experience from which it would be difficult to recover spiritually and emotionally.

I would be less than candid if I did not admit to moments of doubt, ambivalence, even discomfort about the Jewish state—though more about its effects than its existence. Having a land to which to emigrate, to live by right and not by tolerance, imbibing the air of freedom, living without the contract of emancipation, has exacted a high cost in terms of past Jewish greatness. To be sure, this achievement derived from the unwholesome and psychically unsavory tensions of Diaspora life. But the greatness existed and the achievements! I cannot dismiss the fear that the normalcies of statehood and having a land of one's own may culminate in a greater imitateness than has been attributed to Western assimilationism—though, of course, in a different sense. I cannot close my eyes to expressions of Jewish chauvinism and militarism, though I find them more pronounced among Western Jews starved for victories than among Israelis. There has been an attrition of values based on a world order in favor of more national concerns. It is obvious that a state must act like a state, a nation behave like a nation, and a chronically beleaguered one only more so. And so, while I am not pleased with

any Israeli developments and effects on Jewries elsewhere—and while I remain critical—I am not certain of viable alternatives.

The Israeli present often strikes me as no less martyrish than the Diaspora past. Whether this second thirty-year war in history will not leave Israel prostrate from exhaustion, as the first one did Central Europe, it is too early to tell. My agonizing over Israel, and some of my fears, stem from the ever more recognizable truth that Israel did not develop slowly, organically, normally—that, instead, it was literally willed into existence. Can Israel, in the face of continued adversity, *will* to survive?

3. Not being able to believe in the genetic inferiority of the Arabs or any other people, I have never been able to envisage Israel's survival on military strength alone and without successful co-existence with the Arabs. Hence, I could view the crushing Arab defeats of 1956 and 1967 as only obstacles to a *détente*, as nasty wounds festering in the Arab psyche. International relationships are not based, to be sure, on mainly psychological factors, but, in this instance, wounded national pride was intertwined with the necessity of coming to the negotiating-table with drooping heads and empty hands. The mere possibility of future Arab strength has, perhaps too suddenly, become an immediate and frightening reality. But out of this altered reality I extract at least the faint hope that a more peaceful relationship may evolve than has existed in the past. My greatest fear, at the moment, for achieving the absolutely essential co-existence centers about the divisions in the Arab world, the personal magnetism and Islamic fanaticism of a Quaddaffi, and the dangers inherent in modernization. As for Israel, the loss of the image of invincibility and intransigence may eventually prove beneficial and afford Israeli diplomacy greater latitude. But, in the final analysis, decisions pertaining to Jerusalem and Damascus, Amman and Cairo, will not be made in those cities, but in Moscow and Washington.

4. Barring any major outbursts of Jew-hatred here or abroad, the trend toward nominalism would seem difficult to arrest. With religion on the wane, Jewish culture expressing itself more vigorously in American than in Jewish life, the burden of Jewish survival rests more heavily than in the past on the national component of the Jewish "triad." Whether united action on Soviet Jewry (about which I have grave reservations), or avid support of Israel, or generosity to Jewish institutions suffice to bolster a sagging commitment is open to question. There are at least some disturbing signs that the strength, vitality and enthusiasm which still distinguished American Jewish life at the beginning of the sixties has been sapped. The older generations are weary, while the view of the younger generation is still blurred. On the one hand, there is the encouraging interest in college-level Judaic studies by some; on the other hand, there is in others the craving for an unlined humanity in

which ethnicity or human particularism is rejected as outmoded and atavistic. Neither is likely to be attracted to features of Jewish life simply because of being born of Jewish parents into a Jewish environment.

Jewish life in America needs to be revitalized. Above all, this requires a more satisfactory resolution of the conflicts in Jews confronted with choice and freedoms. Young Jews will need to be convinced that there is more to their way of life than saying Kaddish, taking pride in the accomplishments of Israel or some individual Jewish great, or mechanically pledging one's best to UJA. The questions "Why bother?" "Why not intermarry?" "What is it really worth?" will be asked with increasing frequency and the responses may not be soothing. The problem, as I see it, does not lie with Jewish educators, but with Jewish leaders on much higher levels of thought. Their failure of creativity is too easily imputed to Jewish educators who, after all, merely transmit their formulations and convey them via the images and language of youngsters.

5. I read, discuss—with, and before, others,—and occasionally write about Jewish literature, history and general problems. I attend lectures and symposia on Jewish letters, the Jewish past and present. I attend religious services when I feel I can give or receive. I listen to my rabbi's teachings with thoughtful attention. I am sharply eclectic in my ritual observance, which tends to be minimal.

6. I regard the recurrence of a virulent anti-Semitism, both from the Left and Right, as a distinct possibility. I hope that Jewish organizations will contract, rather than expand, their spheres of concern, opting more selectively for issues of immediate interest to Jews. On others, let Jews speak out vigorously as individuals and citizens. I also hope for a greater awareness on the part of organizations for *Realpolitik*—the ordering of priorities and the judicious fight for these in accordance with actual Jewish strength and the strength of our opponents. This also means determining the moments for attack and retreat and for identifying those areas and times when neither retreat nor compromise is possible. Finally, I plead for the ongoing, continuous evaluation between American and Israeli Jewries, of their political and cultural impact on each other.

7. I find our problems numerous, complex and interrelated. For the immediate present, we need the restoration of faith in our political processes and meaningful proof that political freedom is not a pretext for the preservation of privilege. Over the long haul, we need a redressing of the balance between individual right and the collective good, the complex of social issues relating to the racial dilemma, and adjusting the facts of U. S. power to the catapulting to eminence of more primitive cultures.

My Perspective Trends To Be Mystical

EDWARD K. KAPLAN

I WRITE WITH SOME EMBARRASSMENT, FEELING at once like an outsider and an intimate partner with the Jewish fellowship. Rather than expressing "where I stand" as a static position, this essay represents a brief immobile moment of self-scrutiny. Judaism, the religion of my birth, in its American middle-class form, is not the culture in which I feel most at ease. Personal and professional immersion in French literature and thought sends my roots to Europe. Even more fundamental is my commitment to the quest for God, which detaches my identity from the religious establishment itself, producing a tension with the community that is sometimes exhilarating, sometimes depressing.

Judaism is a personal problem, though a creative one, because of that shifting between the absolute and the particular. The living God idealized by Jewish tradition increases the strength of my aspirations; the fact that mankind has even imagined divine imperatives bolsters my striving with great hope. After an abortive Jewish education, and meaningful exploration of other religious traditions, through the late Abraham J. Heschel, I finally discovered in Judaism a source of spiritual challenge and nourishment. A crucial insight of his explains best how I attempt to structure and interpret my experience: "The self, the fellow-man and the dimension of the holy are the *three* dimensions of mature concern." Religion, to my mind, is shallow unless it confronts with courage all three aspects of reality.

What entralls me in Jewish contacts occurs usually with people to whom God is a serious question: those to whom Judaism requires unfaltering reference to inherited tradition and grave recognition of the silence of God. My roots are also watered by the spirituality of non-Jews, though my participation with them is less profound—and provokes less alienation—than identification with my community.

All too often, what I find in Jewish America is social and intellectual provincialism, spiritually reduced to narrow nationalism, ethnic defensiveness. The theological consequences of the Holocaust should carry more than a negative message; our history of insecurity should remind us that we are responsible for all people, in addition to our immediate family: the blacks in America and the Arabs in the Middle East—to mention only two groups of disinherited we tend to wish did not exist. If Judaism is to blossom as a religious calling—that is, as more than a merely social label—we must harmonize the security of ethnicity with our professed universal values.

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Can we reconcile Biblical ideals with official suppression of dissent within the community? I am thinking of organizational hostility to the Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East and to rabbis who dare question certain Israeli policies, and to the lusty pleasure some leaders apparently take in fulminating against the so-called New Left. Are all dissenters traitors? Without flexibility and complete dedication to truth, neither our country nor our community can survive.

The State of Israel is, for me, not a dwelling place, nor the sole source of Jewish religion and culture, but a barometer of my people's dreams, a place where my spiritual hopes are tested. At the same time, I embrace the Diaspora, which I interpret as an exile from God and from the realization of a Holy Land. This separation reminds me of the gulf between my search and my distant aspirations. It is bitterly ironic that the haven of European Jewry is less generous to its Oriental brethren, and is also partially responsible for momentous injustices against the Palestinian Arabs. Reluctance to aid some sort of non-threatening Palestinian self-realization is also a grave political error. Those depressed at Israel's slim and disastrous victory in the latest war could take heart from a more far-sighted perspective: the agonizing promise of a new Israel, one no longer cloistered by proud military machinery, but one spiritually strong enough to respect, then accept her Arab neighbors—with a confidence to face the uncertainties that cooperation will involve. The destiny of the Arab and Jewish peoples are one. As an Arab Palestinian, Edward Said, has sensitively remarked: "Each is the other." History has proven dismally that one becomes what one does to the other.

These notions about the Jewish destiny are sharpened by the secular milieu in which I live. Teaching in a liberal arts college, rather than threatening my religious perspective, has vivified it. That vocation makes the intellectual and moral demand for each of us to confirm our sense of truth, and to communicate and justify our commitments. Religion, also, requires that our ideals become an intimate part of our lives.

Religious tradition—unlike secular society—claims a validity deriving from an original divine-human encounter. Yet, today, most people are sensitive only to God's absence. Contemporary Judaism must respond authentically to those who are cast adrift in a cosmos with metaphysical meaning, awakening within them a craving for the ultimate. What can we do? We cannot expect most people, even rabbis, to have experienced God directly. I expect simply our religious leaders to ask the relevant questions with honesty, intellectual seriousness and depth. Lucid doubt, uncertain waiting for God in the darkness, struggle with the world's demonic realities—that is the path toward modern faith.

Perhaps Martin Buber was correct to consider dialogue the key to Jewish existence. Dialogue insures the confirmation of oneself and of a distinct other, and is a measure of our capacity to grow. The present

failure of Jewish/Christian dialogue—to take one symptomatic example—is due, in large part, to its primarily political character: public relations, protection of special interests. Imagine interfaith dialogue fed on an interrogation of mystical piety and of truly prophetic morality. The real theological and social differences between us could ultimately be subordinated to the shared mission to hasten the realization of humanity's divine image.

It is disturbing to describe one's personal Jewish observance and/or self-expression. I revere tradition because of the pious life it has encoded, though so imperfectly realized. But my poor knowledge of Hebrew, the pressures of my social identity, intellectual scepticism, and severe ideological disagreements with many devoted Jews have contrived to keep me away from all but inspired moments of halakhic observance. Though in several yearly occasions of Jewish communal worship I sometimes experience true prayer. And in prayer I know most clearly whether or not I am at home. Because my perspective tends to be mystical, a reaching toward the divine, most services, frankly, turn me off; not only because a sense of the sacred is absent, but because I do not even learn anything about Judaism from most sermons. The community should share with my frightful ignorance the blame for my preference for personal religion.

Yet I see my vocation as teacher, scholar and writer as a priestly, fully Jewish, commitment. I pass long hours of quasi-monastic silence, in the solitude of an isolated office, exploring writers' inner and outer worlds, and sometimes penning to society an expression of my findings. I teach a religion course, entitled "Mysticism and the Moral Life," which integrates my private and professional lives more fully: classroom communion with the richness of French literature is complemented by confrontation with spiritual masters. The companionship of intelligent and open-minded fellow seekers in these classes, and the personal writing it engenders, have allowed my odyssey to blossom. In scholarly writing, I have attempted to achieve a synthesis of methodological objectivity and empathic involvement with writers who have important messages to convey.

Secular academe, its dedication to rational rigor, moral authenticity, and the reality of ideas, is now the most fertile ground for my particular form of "Jewish self-expression." What I find enriching about American Jewish life reflects those high standards, with one addition: a religious community is meant to nurture the quest for holiness. Religion should sanctify what is merely good, for it recognizes a reality beyond mankind, while reminding us of our task peacefully to redeem it. Our future lies in our fidelity to that calling.

What It Means To Live In Israel

ELIHU KATZ

THE OUTLOOK WAS ROSIER IN 1961. I SEE THAT I was worried then about what "normalcy" might be doing to Judaism, both in the United States and in Israel. There are a few more pressing problems to overcome now, for the sake of the luxury of worrying about normalcy again.

For the moment at least, old-fashioned insecurity is back: Jews here and abroad are anxious about survival—social and personal. To live in Israel means committing your children to the next war (you ask, "What place does Israel . . . occupy in your scale of values?")! To live in Israel means having to keep pushing back the guilt that one should be doing more, should have done more, to prevent the wars. To live in Israel means helping young people remember that the present has a past, and that there is joy and satisfaction, as well as grief, in assuming its obligations.

Insecurity is not news for Russian Jews either. It has a different flavor now, since the miracle of their discovery that so many of them want to be Jewish. But those who are jobless or in jail or in mental asylums are receiving reports from their luckier friends that Israel falls short of their dream. (One is reminded of the two Jews, each of whom greeted the other with "*meshugeh*" as their oceanliners crossed in mid-Atlantic.)

New York does not seem such a safe place, either. Not just on the subways and in the streets. Perhaps I am overinfluenced by *Commentary's* abortive romance with America, but the challenge to the legitimacy of achievement and merit *does* sound like a real loss for the Jews. Nor do Jews and Judaism thrive when theories of conspiracy are abroad; one has the impression that the American virtues of trust and tolerance may be drained dry by the continual crises of credibility. Occasionally, one hears a whisper of uncertainty from an American Jewish intellectual, or feels a tremor of anxiety in the Jewish community lest something—the oil boycott, for example—cause a wave of anti-Semitic feeling. I have never worried seriously about the prospect of anti-Semitism in America, but this is a time for reexamination of what Israelis call "conceptions" and I am glad to be reassured.

Indeed, friends assure me that American Jews are worried only about us, not about themselves. But it is undeniable that they are having to cope with the tarnish on those aspects of Israel's image which had become part of themselves. When Israel is less glamorous in the eyes of others,

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Jews have to provide their own explanations of its worth. It then becomes clear to all that Zionism is not just for people who have nowhere else to go. The old questions about Jewish statehood have been reopened here, and some of the answers, explicit and implicit, have come from American Jews. I believe that Israelis are more convinced than before of the mutuality of this interdependence.

Yet, I wish to discourage those American Jewish leaders who claim to see an analogy between the Holocaust and what happened here on Yom Kippur. Even—*rahmana lizlan*—if the cities had been attacked, the analogy would be false. The political isolation of Israel and the feeling of American Jews that money is not enough may bear some resemblance to what happened in Europe; and perhaps the world would have looked on politely had we been overrun. But that is different, I insist, from being gassed and incinerated by German butchers and bureaucrats dressed in white aprons and listening to Bach. Zionism may have incited wars, but it makes a Holocaust impossible. If I *have* to make a choice, I have no problem choosing. But neither do I have a Masada complex!

Young Orthodox Jews from America are happy here because young Orthodox Jews from everywhere are happy here. Paradoxically, perhaps, they are the group that has least trouble distinguishing Israeli identity from Jewish identity: the two are highly reinforcing of each other, but they are not the same. For less observant people, the two identities overlap amorphously, and being an Israeli sometimes becomes the content of one's Jewishness. Traditional values such as reading, study, Sabbath, holidays, chosenness are still alive, but they are undergoing a process of nationalization which, ultimately, may be subversive of their inherent meaning. The renaissance of Jewish culture is Israel's ultimate mission. In my opinion, the illusion of security of recent years was not altogether dysfunctional for creativity, except when the latter was overshadowed by self-satisfaction or by patriotic pomp.

It is considered a joke to say that one is in Israel to participate in the revival of the Hebrew language. It happens, though, to be a good reason. It was brilliant to insist that Hebrew, rather than one of the languages of the diaspora, be the official language of the country. It gave all groups an equal start, and immediately connected the Israeli present to the whole of the Jewish past. I find great satisfaction in the allusions which the language awakens in me. It is actually a pleasure to be so close to the center of Jewish scholarship. I am proud that my sons can become bar-mitzvah in a congregation that challenges them to understand. Hebrew may not be very good for science, or for international relations, but it is very good for Judaism.

The big question in the cultural realm is whether Israeli culture—like the cultures of other small nations—can escape the homogenizing influences of the free-flow of information. Creating the conditions for

producing culture is one part of the problem. I am not sure how to do that; neither are the Universities, or the arts, or the media.

The other side of the problem is in creating the conditions for consuming culture. Here I have a dream. Sometime, soon, the five-day week will come to Israel. Might not the extra day-off become the focus of a national movement of adult education? I mean education for its own sake—*torah lishmah*—not just instrumental learning. Such normative use of leisure—rather than do-your-own-thing leisure—seems to me of the essence of Jewish continuity.

The View From Jerusalem

JAMES KUGEL

"Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt—"
title of a Nazi propaganda film extolling the free city of Theresienstadt.

The way things turn out is always funny and typical. What course the State of Israel will finally take is not quite guessable, but guessing about it becomes a preoccupation. Jerusalem is the center—how will it turn out? History's parts seem to glide into position on their own, make fun of high pronouncements.

It is generally admitted that the present-day reality of the Jewish State is quite different from that anticipated by Theodor Herzl. His State was Germanic, bourgeois, and secular. Curiously, those who were to realize his dream could agree with the blueprint enthusiastically only on the last point—curiously, because this instance of agreement was inconsequential. Israel's Jewishness never was merely a matter of "nationality," and is so less and less.

Herzl expected Zion's population to be rooted in world Jewry's outcasts—the flame of anti-Semitism, in his famous image, keeps the Jewish pot bubbling; so long as it is not extinguished, the Jewish State will not lack potential settlers. But the flame is no longer anti-Semitism, but the very idea of the existence of a Jewish State. Increasingly, those who leave the roiling waters of American (and Russian!) Jewry to ascend to Israel are not the most persecuted, but the most Jewish, of the Jews. *Hevel havalim!*—who expected this?

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What will happen to American Jewry in twenty or a hundred years impinges on our plans and our notion of ourselves.

I can picture a much-reduced, much-assimilated American remnant, all of whose "Jewish content"—props and personnel—comes from abroad: a time when rabbis, teachers of Hebrew, camp directors and so forth; then candles, mazot, and kosher food of all variety; textbooks and Bibles and a thousand lesser items—everything arrives *m'ever hayam*. I should think that in such a day it would be difficult to convince one's children that being a Jew was something of their own; but that lesson successfully imparted, it would likely to be even more difficult to convince them to stay put. In such a day the choice for American Jews will be, more starkly than our novelists ever imagined, whether to be Americans, or Jews—but not, in any case, to abide under the hopeless oxymoron with which we now style ourselves.

I would rather leave such weighty topics as "Is the Diaspora Doomed" to a more sanguine essayist. Besides, as I've said, things always turn out in their own special way, and predicting them is certainly not the business of modest symposiasts. I have said this much because these prospects are on my mind when I think about American Jews, and because I believe they should not be as remote from everybody else's as I suspect they are.

Another reason: sometimes the nature of an action ends up being defined by its proximity to something else, past or future, apparently unrelated. This is true of much that was said and one in 1935, 1939, 1946. For the present, I believe our actions and thoughts are tied to the existence of Israel much more than it is comfortable to think. 1948 is something we have fallen asleep next to, vaguely aware; but it has started moving now; what it is, is something we will wake up to and then, I suppose, find out what must be done.

A Last-Ditch Hope for Judaism

ROBERT LANGBAUM

IN 1961, I AND OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO THE *Commentary* symposium noted the radical change in the situation of the American Jew since World War II. Discrimination had, since the

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war, broken down in the universities and the professions; the Jew, we all noted, had been admitted into the American Establishment. All this remains increasingly true. For the Civil Rights movement, which began shortly after 1961, has abolished social along with professional discrimination. Jews can now live and vacation where they like, and can even join most college fraternities and country clubs.

Such progress has been very good for us as individuals, but very bad for our sense of Jewish identity. Why make an issue of being a Jew when other Americans make no issue of it, when you can live whole days and weeks without needing to remember that you are a Jew? Of course, those of us who grew up in the prewar world of discrimination and quotas are not likely to lose our sense of Jewish identity even if it remains quiescent. But what about our children who, if we live away from the big Jewish population centers, are likely to have mainly Christian friends and to have neither suffered nor witnessed any disadvantage in being Jewish? Even those who receive a Jewish education are likely to hear about their Jewishness as though it were a remote historical fact and to view, as they grow up, the Jewish education of their childhood as having prepared them for a world that does not exist. Children raised in such circumstances are likely to feel alienated from grandparents who, immersed in totally Jewish worlds, speak of Gentiles as though they were Martians. Such children may as adults intermarry; they will certainly transmit little of the tradition to their children.

The poor outlook for American Judaism that we noted in 1961 has grown worse as assimilation has grown easier. The outstanding example is the alarmingly steady increase in the number of intermarriages. Nor do I see any obvious remedy, since we can hardly pray for the persecution that would undoubtedly restore our sense of Jewish identity. Life, however, can be counted on to bring troubles enough to keep our Judaism alive. At the time of the October war in Israel, I was amazed to see how many people came forward as Jews whom I had thought quite lost to us. And, by a sad irony, the Civil Rights movement has caused many Jews to discover a common interest in a common fear—the fear that the permissive quotas for Blacks in universities and jobs might inadvertently restore the old restrictive quotas for Jews, the fear that more Blacks must necessarily result in fewer Jews.

What we assimilate to is an American cultural disarray that hastens the process of communal disintegration. Since Americans no longer believe in deference, it becomes increasingly difficult for the generations to live together or maintain ties. Every one wants his own freedom and “fun.” Children, and even their parents, do not want to spoil their “fun” by attending ritual occasions or visiting grandparents; and the grandparents, finding themselves superfluous, seek their own “fun” by retiring to Florida. We are fast gravitating towards new kinds of ghettos,

the ghettos of age groups; and this generation gap destroys the family life on which religious communities, especially Judaism, depend. It is perhaps a consolation that we are only a little worse off than other American religions, that we are all victims of cultural chaos.

In 1961, I dismissed organized Judaism as barren and saw creativity only in the secular equivalents of Judaism—in the contributions of the conspicuously large number of distinguished Jewish artists, scientists and thinkers. I still hold this position, but fear that Jews may lose their intellectual distinction along with their other differences. For the distinction, the willingness to work harder and take life more seriously than other Americans, came from the coiled up energy of a people recently released from the ghetto and from strict religious observance; it came, also, from the tensions of people who had to make their way in a hostile environment. As we move farther from the source of our energy and idealism and lose the tensions generated by alienation, we relax into the general level of competence—no better, no worse than others. It seems to me that I detect this decline of traditionally high Jewish motivation in the Jewish students I now encounter.

I have a confession to make. I, who considered and still do consider organized Judaism barren, am president of my local temple. Such are the compromises of middle age. Why, I ask myself, do I lead an institution in which I so little believe? Although my intuition of God would accord with any religion, I find it an advantage to articulate this intuition through the rites of the religion I have been born into. That is one reason for my commitment to the temple. Another is historical sentimentality. I don't want anything precious to pass away; I want the Jewish people to go on surviving simply because they have survived until now. A temple or synagogue, a visible symbol of Judaism where people can on crucial occasions (bar mizvahs, weddings, deaths) identify themselves as Jews, must—however minimally—further such survival! Like so many Jews, however disaffected, I want a temple to be there even if I don't much go to it; and in a small community like mine, I found I had eventually to pitch in to insure that the temple would be there.

I want Judaism to survive not only for the sake of historical continuity, but also—and this is my other reason—for the sake of my personal continuity. I need Judaism as a link with my childhood, with my parents, grandparents and so on back. "One has," as I said in 1961, "one's identity on so many levels of consciousness." One may reject consciously what one affirms unconsciously. A hope for the future lies in the unconscious attachments that we can pass on to our children by maintaining the institutions and symbols of Judaism. For only the attachments that cluster around symbols rather than ideas run so deep that they can

be passed on in turn by our children, no matter what their lips affirm, to their children.

But the main hope for the future is Israel. As long as Israel exists, no one who has any memory of Jewish family will be able to resist having his sense of connection amplified—even if he combats Israel as certain left-wing young Jews have in recent years. I have assumed in these remarks that Jewish identity must derive from conflict, and decline as conflict declines. This is how I experience Jewish identity here and now in America. But in Israel, I hope, Jewish identity is different; there one can be a Jew as naturally and inevitably as one breathes. That is why I think that if anything new happens to revive Judaism, to make it again a religion we can believe in with head *and* heart, this revival will originate in Israel.

Participation Is Needed

LEONARD LEVIN

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY IS UNDERGOING a transition with respect to its Jewish identity. For over a generation, it has measured itself largely in organizational terms and succeeded quite well by those standards, while failing conspicuously to develop any widespread personal participation in traditional Jewish cultural-religious pursuits such as prayer, study, Shabbat and festival celebration. The fruits of this failure are now beginning to be felt. Jews with no intrinsic relation to living Jewish practice have little or no reason to “support” a “Judaism” whose chief *raison d’être* is nostalgia for the folkways of previous generations. If they are willing to join synagogues for certain social benefits which they offer, they are increasingly less willing to send their children to any Hebrew school that makes real demands, or to attend religious functions on a regular basis. As schools and sanctuaries empty out, the life and purpose of the organization become attenuated to the vanishing point.

As synagogue Judaism became voided of personal-experimental content, other forces on the Jewish scene were moving to fill the vacuum. Reconstructionism, with its slogan of “Judaism as a Civilization,” often seemed more concerned with modernizing the ideology of American

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Judaism than with revitalizing its practice. Still, it was at least partly under Kaplan's influence that the Conservative movement's Camp Ramah developed a milieu in which Judaism was lived out actively on all levels in a spirit of creative innovation. The youngsters who came home from Ramah were understandably dismayed at the shallowness of Jewish experience which they found in the synagogues. It was Art Green who first (to my knowledge) came to the conclusion that the American synagogue was bankrupt as a positive Jewish influence, and hit upon a model for the necessary alternative, in an imaginative coming-together of Ramah, Hasidism, the Pharisaic *havurah* as presented by Jacob Neusner, and (*lehavdil*) the catacombs of early Christianity. He founded Havurat Shalom in Boston as an experiment in intensive Jewish living, semi-communal in form, in style a cross between neo-Hasidic and hippie. Other communities in larger cities and on college campuses have since developed on the model of Havurat Shalom. Perhaps more significantly, other groups have arrived at the *havurah* form on their own, without knowledge of Havurat Shalom and without significant influence from the youth culture. Harold Schulweis's utilization of small groups within the framework of a larger congregation is but one notable instance of what promises to be a widespread tendency.

The *havurah*—a group of about twenty to thirty individuals or approximately ten nuclear families, meeting regularly for Jewish study and celebration—differs from the synagogue both in the social situation it creates and in the kind of Jewish experience it fosters. Like the extended family, it creates a social unit big enough to overcome the individual's sense of isolation and rootlessness, but small enough to insure that every individual's participation in the group is felt, and that his relation to the other members is genuine and personal. Professional leadership is nonexistent, or minimal and advisory; thus, for any activity to happen, the members *must* take an active role, and activities are structured so that everyone *can* participate. This, in turn, decisively shapes the kind of Jewish experience that takes place—egalitarian, participatory, tailor-made to the group's needs, a learning process.

The Jewish Catalog is an ideal resource for such Jewish experiences. Significantly, it is a collaborative venture involving the efforts of at least four dozen persons, most of whom have been active in the youth *havurot* and embody its values. In effect, it is a do-it-yourself guide to Jewish living. It is potentially a landmark in the laicization and personalization of American Jewish experience, which was until now languishing under the *untraditional* relegation of religious life to a professional priestly class. Until now, we had "rabbi's manuals" which instructed the rabbi how to perform ceremonies for the uninstructed masses, and inspirational guides for the layman to understand what was supposed to be the significance of the ceremonies he would watch the

rabbi perform. *The Jewish Catalog*—and, for that matter, the whole style of Jewish life which the *havurah* embodies—eventually renders such genres obsolete. Living Judaism supplants organizational Judaism, in the same way that actually loving someone supplants dreaming about love stories.

The success of this tendency will by no means imply the obsolescence of Jewish organizations. Synagogues are potentially the frameworks (or *shadkhaning*-agents) within which many new *havurot* can be formed and maintained. Rabbis can revert to their traditional teaching role, once their pastoral duties are largely absorbed by the *havurot* (whose members can visit each other in sickness and bereavement, and counsel each other in routine crises), and once there are Jews whose involvement in Jewish life stimulates them to ask meaningful questions, and prepares them to appreciate meaningful answers. The future of the Jewish organization hinges on the problem of giving today's Jews a sufficient motive to devote their time and energies to Judaism; a personalized, participatory Jewish experience is the only motivating factor with general application.

I have so far indicated "where *we* stand," for a "*we*" comprising several hundred persons in greater or lesser degree. I shall now indicate how my personal stance varies from this in one important respect.

The Havurah approach is non-theological, or it takes theology for granted. So does the Jewish tradition. There is no chapter in *The Jewish Catalog*, nor is there a tractate in the Talmud, devoted to theology. Only the medieval rabbis dealt with theology, because they had studied Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy.

We are in a similar intellectual predicament today, with challenges from natural science, social science, and philosophy. About the only safe philosophical stance for a theologian today is existentialism—the contention that decisions, not arguments, are what really matter—a valid personal option, but of no help to one who has opted for the (at least) equally valid view that arguments *do* matter.

I maintain that those of us who are able, ought to pursue the theological enterprise in its classic sense. Judaism is not merely "a set of activities in which one either engages or does not engage," although it *can* be that, and must be *at least* that. Those who should get together to do theology are those Jews with interests in the whole range of modern disciplines of thought and in Judaism, who are ready to bring all these resources to bear on the problem as just defined, in a spirit of open inquiry with no prior assumptions. I imagine that many of these people have no present affiliation (except, perhaps, in the purely formal sense) with Jewish organizations—with what presently-constituted organizations would they want to affiliate? I do not even know how we shall come to find each other. For such a predicament, belief in divine providence is very helpful (whatever its other drawbacks).

My Path

ROBERT J. MILCH

JUDAISM IS MY ABIDING CONCERN AND A FUNDAMENTAL element in my image of myself. To elaborate on this, and to explain something of how it came about, I must indulge in a bit of personal history.

As a child, I lived in an almost exclusively Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn, grew up in a household and extended family that were more or less observant, and received a Talmud Torah education (in addition, of course, to my regular education). I was religious, but in a child's way, and the Judaism conveyed to me was so primitive and simplistic that I rapidly outgrew and abandoned it, seeing myself as enlightened and progressive, an intellectual with far-ranging interests and social contacts, and most certainly above falling into the morass of archaic superstition and ignorant narrow-mindedness. There remained, however, a strong Jewish consciousness, a love for the Jewish people and for Jewish history and culture, as well as a kind of incipient taste for religion. Throughout my adolescence and twenties I cultivated these, often indirectly (through dispassionate academic studies, for instance), and with a certain amount of self-consciousness because it was difficult to provide such interests with a satisfactory rationalization. At the same time, I combatted within myself a recurring spiritual tendency—or temptation, as I viewed it.

My reading and thinking were leading me in a certain direction, however, perhaps because I was becoming aware of needs and responsibilities that were not being served by the other world-views to which I was exposed. In time, my former outlook was shattered, one of the critical contributory experiences being a visit to Auschwitz in the late 1960s. I began to believe in God again, and I mention this first, even though it was by no means the first change I underwent in point of chronology, because, despite the obvious existence of affirmations of Jewishness in which theism does not play a part, I consider it the foundation of any authentically Jewish mode of life. Finally, I became something of a *baal teshuvah*, in large part due to the influence of my wife, who seven years after our civil marriage became a sincere and dedicated convert to Judaism, and of the young rabbi, then a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, who tutored her (and me) for more than a year and subsequently became our close friend.

Over the years since, Judaism has come to be a decisive source of sense and structure for me. It is obvious that my wife and I value religion qua religion—belief in God and faith that human existence has

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meaning, value, and purpose, however difficult these may be to perceive and notwithstanding the many constraints that circumscribe and delimit man's possibilities. This is primary, and it offers its own spiritual and emotional rewards. On a secondary level—from, let us say, the necessary but not sufficient conditions of our commitment to Judaism—we also derive many benefits. Our Jewishness is the source of a potent and worthwhile identity and a means of resisting the insidious influences of the bland, rootless, unhappy society in which we live. It is, in addition, the basis for a moral outlook and ethical system, a guide to good conduct, which is difficult enough with a guide and virtually impossible without one. Finally, we see ourselves as contributing, albeit in a tiny way, to a world-historical task, the preservation of Judaism and the Jewish way of life. Some may condemn such concerns as parochial—once I might have done so myself—but in an era in which most American Jews seem content to let their heritage be cheapened and attenuated—indeed, seem to participate in the process with unbecoming enthusiasm—a concern with Jewish causes and Jewish survival is not unwarranted and may even be a duty of sorts—not merely to ourselves, although existentially that might be justification enough, but to history and the future, and, dare I say this, to the One who assembled us at Sinai and made us, in some mysterious way, the bearers of his message and the agents of his purpose.

In view of all this, it will come as no surprise that my wife and I maintain a Jewish household, but considering the wide range of practice (and nonpractice) comprehended by American Jewry, this statement means little without an enumeration of at least our more important ceremonial observances and forms of Jewish expression.

Intellectually, we regard ourselves as most in sympathy with the aims and thinking of the traditionalist wing of the Conservative movement, although I personally prefer the worship service and atmosphere of an Orthodox shul. We observe kashruth both at home and outside (somewhat more flexible outside), are members of a synagogue, regularly contribute to Jewish charities and causes, buy and read Jewish books, and subscribe to nearly a dozen Jewish periodicals, including a Hebrew magazine. We observe all the holidays in the traditional manner. On the Sabbath we have both Kiddush and Havdalah, I attend services about once a month, and it is a strict rule with us that we do not shop or handle money, use the car (except to attend synagogue) or work (which is an especially pregnant observance for me because I am self-employed and have my office at home)—we do, however, use electricity and the telephone. In addition, I devote a certain amount of time every week (if nothing else, at least part of each Saturday afternoon) to study. At a bare minimum I do the weekly Sidrah and Haftarah with Rashi, but, even at my busiest, I usually manage some Mishnah (often Pirke Avot) and Mishneh Torah (which I love because its language is so fluent), and

sometimes I learn a few lines of the easier Gemara in Berakhot, the only tractate I am yet able to manage. My son attends a synagogue nursery school, where he is being taught Jewish things appropriate to his age, and we include him in all our observances, also making the Sabbath a special family day.

We find these practices very satisfying, else we would not engage in them, yet when we were newcomers to the suburban area in which we now live, it seemed for a while as if they would isolate us from our neighbors—most especially our Jewish neighbors, many of whom regard Christmas as the highpoint of the yearly holiday cycle, go into debt to pay for a bar mitzvah conducted according to the halakah of the American Caterers Association, and choose their synagogue (if they choose one at all) on such grounds as whether or not its facilities include a sauna. They could not understand us, may even have resented us because we inadvertently made them feel guilty, and were puzzled by the fact that we are moderately religious yet do not seem intellectually or emotionally defective—indeed, quite the opposite. Now more accustomed to us, they are at least somewhat curious about our life-style and views, which suggests to me that we are performing a valuable service in demonstrating to others that it is possible to be both “normal” and Jewishly committed.

In fact, the need for this demonstration points up the greatest and most dangerous shortcoming of present-day American Judaism. It has failed to convince its adherents (and in many cases hasn’t even tried) that mature religion is possible, and even necessary, in the twentieth century. Rabbis and other responsible persons are afraid, unwilling, or unable to make the “conversion” of American Jewry a serious goal, though it is one to which they sometimes pay lip-service. Synagogues exist for a whole supermarket of purposes, and religion, instead of being the central concern, is one “activity” among many, tolerated for the sake of tradition, color, and propriety, and squeezed in somewhere between bingo, marriage encounters, and coffee klatches—all estimable, perhaps, but certainly not as the chief functions of our “houses of study and worship.” Meanwhile, our children are being lost, and to compound the problem, women who want to participate are being refused and turned away.

I can really see only three virtues in the present-day American synagogue. It is there, and often it provides home and livelihood for our scholars and thinkers. It manages, through its diverse programs and its unwillingness to make demands, to keep a substantial number of American Jews aware that they are Jews (however vaguely the word may be defined); and it raises money for Israel, which desperately needs our support and, for the time being, has come to serve as the main focus of American Jewish commitment and emotion. This may not last in its

present form, for we and the Jews of Israel are getting farther away from our common origin in East Europe, and someday—who knows when or how?—their position may be more secure than it is now. I once thought it was impossible to lead a Jewish life outside Israel, and because of this I toyed for a while with the possibility of aliyah. Travels abroad have taught me that I am inescapably American, and, discontent as I may be with some aspects of American life, I have also found that a Jewish life is possible anywhere.

Nonetheless, to my mind, Israel is, and will remain, of incalculable importance to us, for its future and our future are inextricably intertwined. Despite differences that are bound to become greater and more painful with every passing year, we are a single people, all Jews, and no one of us is really secure and well off unless all of us are. I cannot imagine how the problem of Arab-Jewish relations will be solved. Some problems, perhaps, are never solved—they are superseded by new problems that make the old ones irrelevant, and I suspect that something of that kind will eventually occur in the Middle East, assuming that we all survive long enough. Until then, and while waiting not too confidently for the Messiah, we must do all we can to help them, and, for that matter, our brethren in the Soviet Union and other places, including parts of this country, who are deprived of freedom, sustenance, and peace of mind.

Comments On The Questions

WILLIAM NOVAK

FULL ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS ARE OBVIOUSLY impossible in such a short space, and even short responses may seem presumptuous. These remarks, then, are intended merely as comments on each of the seven areas.

1. As we begin to imagine the limits of technology, it becomes increasingly clear that the basic questions of our lives are still unanswered. These last few years have seen a return to religion, and this trend will continue, although the old religious forms may be bypassed. I now see a new Judaism being developed, one which is peculiarly American, and which derives directly out of the Havurot communities and similar sensi-

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bilities in the Jewish counter-culture. This new Judaic impulse is fed by the best qualities in each of the recognized branches of Judaism: the authenticity of Orthodoxy, the liberalism of Reform, the scholarship of Conservative Judaism, the social awareness of Reconstructionism, the excitement of Hasidism. In addition, we must add to this recipe the ingredients derived from recent Jewish history: the effects of the Jewish experience in Israel, Europe, the Soviet Union and America during these last fifty years. This new Judaism is not a movement, but a decentralized series of shared concerns and values. Thus far, its primary text seems to be *The Jewish Catalog*.

2. Although I am not, strictly speaking, a Zionist, and may never choose to live in Israel, there is nothing more important to me as a Jew than the safe, secure and creative development of Israel. In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur war, I left the core group of Havurat Shalom Community because, as I perceived it, the community's response to that crisis was wholly inadequate. Until then, I could not have imagined leaving the Havurah. My concern for Israel is instinctive rather than articulated, but I have been deeply affected by others who have articulated it, the flesh-and-blood theologians and thinkers: Emil Fackenheim, Elie Wiesel, Milton Himmelfarb. All three have helped me to understand that the Jewish past is inexorably linked to the Jewish present and the Jewish future, and that all are part of a seamless Jewish history. Our physical concern for Israel, Soviet Jewry, and other trouble spots for Jews, whatever else they may be, must also be religious concerns.

3. The Arab-Israeli conflict is hopelessly complex, and I cannot offer anything new here. Israel must be able to live in peace. The Palestinians must be repatriated, preferably on the West Bank. Both strategy and morality would suggest the need for great flexibility on Israel's part; the hardliners have been shown to be bankrupt. Israel will undoubtedly have to make great territorial compromises, and this *may* increase the possibilities of peace. Everything must be tried, including a plan for economic federation, as hopeless as it may now seem. Israel must think more in terms of the larger future, and the dynamics of the conflict twenty and fifty years hence. I do not believe that Israel has done everything possible to make peace. But, certainly, the other countries in the Middle East have done less.

4. I am optimistic about Jewish life in America. American Jews are becoming more critical and more open, and these are signs of health, not weakness. There are other causes for optimism: a great increase in Jewish studies, especially on the campus, a growing sensitivity to Jewish art and culture, the effects of the new cultural pluralism and the disillusionment with universalism. The institutions are having less and less effect on Jewish life and that, too, is good. The Jewish women's movement is an enormously healthy force.

5. Recent events in Israel—I am writing in the wake of yet another Arab terrorist attack—remind me that my primary mode of Jewish self-expression is my concern about the physical survival and safety of Jews everywhere. There are other modes as well: during these past five years my entire Jewish life has been within the contexts of the New York Havurah, and Havurat Shalom Community. I have come to celebrate the yearly and weekly cycles of the Jewish calendar in a warm and intimate surrounding. I am especially moved by the celebration of Shabbat: the Friday night liturgy (especially the Psalms), the ritual meals, the continuing cycle of the Torah reading, and, above all, the idea and the practice of one day of rest out of the weekly course of events.

6. The major problem confronting the Jewish community today is our anxiety about crossing the line into a serious Jewish commitment. Quite naturally, we are hesitating. Behind us lie the organizations and the institutions with their endless hierarchies, meetings, task forces, reports, bureaucracies, and their three-headed dragon of anti-Semitism, intermarriage and assimilation. Ahead lie the uncharted possibilities for a new, physical and personally-involving Jewish commitment.

7. The major issue confronting the United States is the quality of American life. I mean our ecology in the most general sense: on the one hand, our air, land and water; on the other, our cultural and consumer needs, our shoddy industry, faulty automobiles, dangerous streets, empty media, unhealthy foods, false advertising, and a hundred other signs of a decaying and vapid society. Our Jewish tradition is one long lesson in being sensitive to the ways in which we live, which suggests, as I see it, that we become more active in these “soft” issues.

By Way of Response

LEO PFEFFER

MEEK AND TIMID AS I AM, I DARE NOT DEVIATE from the instructions given, and will respond to all seven questions asked of me, although in view of the word limitation imposed, it is more like filling out a questionnaire than writing an article.

1. I have no doubts regarding the survival of religion or of Judaism, although, particularly in respect to the former, not necessarily in

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its present form. Catholicism is experiencing a period of *Sturm und Drang* and will never again be as monolithic and authoritarian as it has been in the past. Judaism, with a history of co-existence of Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and *kanayim*, and a Talmudic tradition that ascribes equal divine origin to directly contradictory dicta, does not face this crisis, and I say this notwithstanding the current efforts of the religious bloc in Israel to exclude from Judaism those whose conversion does not conform to ultra-Orthodox concepts of halakhah. For my part, I welcome pluralism in religion, and no more want a catholic Judaism than a catholic Catholicism, even though the dangers inherent in the former are obviously much less serious than in the latter.

2. I hope for the day when there will be no State of Israel and no need for one. To me, nationalism is the second greatest curse of our times, second only to nationalism *cum* racism, as in Nazi Germany. Unless we conquer the spirit of *über alles* (fill in your own nation-state), or "my country, right or wrong," we will all be destroyed by it. Nationalism is not only idolatry; it is fratricidal idolatry. In the wars between Samaria and Jerusalem, children of Israel killed other children of Israel. In the three Arab-Israel wars, children of Abraham killed other children of Abraham; and in all wars the children of Adam kill each other.

I would there were no State of Israel, and no State of the United States or of West or East Germany or Luxemburg or Zambia, but only a State of Humanity. I do not believe that Judaism (or any other religion or culture) must have a nation-state for its survival; the *Neturei Karta* and hasidic groups are entirely right in asserting that Judaism's liturgical prayers for return to Zion refer to post-Messianic, and not post-Ben-Gurion times. To me, the true spirit of Judaism is closer to that expressed in Isaiah 19:23 and the Rosh Hashonah *piyyut*, *v'yetayu kol l'avdekha*, than that of either the Davidic or Maccabean dynasties.

However, until such time that the world can assure its Jews that there never again will be Crusades, Inquisitions, pogroms or Holocausts, it has a moral obligation to provide them with a city of refuge in the form of an independent nation-state, and Jews throughout the world have both a right and a duty to see to it that the obligation is honored.

3. I am confident that peace will soon come to Israel and the Arab states and that they will learn to live in friendship and fellowship. However, it will not come as the result of one last, decisive military victory by one side or the other; nor by a policy based on the premise that the only language the other side can understand is force; nor by a failure to recognize that so long as we do have nationalism, Arabs, too, have a sense of national pride and an unwillingness to close a chapter in history on a humiliating defeat. It will come about temporarily as a by-product of the easing of United States-U.S.S.R.-China tensions, and,

more permanently, with the increasing effectiveness of the United Nations as a peace-keeping institution and, ultimately, in the liquidation and disappearance of nation-states claiming unlimited sovereignty. A concomitant of this development must be the elimination of hunger and poverty in the Middle East (as well as elsewhere), and in this Israel can, and will, play a significant role.

4. Notwithstanding the ever-present threat of assimilation, I am optimistic regarding the future of Jewish life in America. The current neo-Orthodox revival (matched by similar revivalism in Christian and unconventional religions) will subside in time, but will leave a needed and healthy concern for, and interest in, ritual and education. In its own way, American Jewish life can be as fruitful religiously and culturally as Babylonian Jewish life after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the First Temple. Torah (and in this I include culture) can go forth to, as well as come forth from Zion.

What is gratifying about this is that Jewry can simultaneously continue to make great contributions to American values. Jeremiah's letter to Babylonian Jewry—"Seek ye the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray for it to the Lord, for in its welfare will you find your welfare"—is as valid today as it was 2500 years ago. American Jews can be proud of the contributions they have made in the struggle for justice and equality.

My fear is that American Jewry will forget Jeremiah's words and will become so inner-directed, and so concerned with its own fears and needs, real and imagined, that it will forget its prophetic tradition. I used to think that the danger to Jeshurun in America is that it will become fat and stop kicking. My present concern is more serious; it is that Jeshurun, having become fat, will kick, not those with concentrations of power and wealth, but rather those without either. Ahab accused Elijah of being a troublemaker. American Jewry used to be a troublemaker but, now, having—in the main—joined the haves, is beginning to be as hostile to the have-not troublemakers as Ahab was to Elijah, with a stance which can most charitably be described as *sheli sheli, v'shelkha shelkha*. I find it a sad day that the major Jewish organizations should find themselves in a lawsuit on the same side with the United States Chamber of Commerce against such former allies as the NAACP, the ACLU, National Education Association and the National Urban Coalition. The day would have been sadder were it not for the fact that two major Jewish organizations joined on the side which, to me, was considerably more consistent with the prophetic tradition of which we used to boast.

5. My personal forms of Jewish self-expression are synagogue, Sabbath and study (the alliteration is accidental): synagogue for ritual and fellowship, Sabbath for keeping me alive, and study because I love it.

6. The major problem confronting the American Jewish community is *not* anti-Semitism, old style or new style. Some day, perhaps, it may be (though I doubt it), and for that reason there must be a State of Israel, but it is not a serious problem today. I do not tremble when the *Merchant of Venice* or *Oliver Twist* is shown on television or in cinemas. I consider efforts to prevent their being shown—efforts accompanied with protestations that we are, of course, against censorship—likely to be more harmful to us as Jews than the showing of the films.

Nor do I equate opposition to a pro-Israel policy on the part of the American government with anti-Semitism. I do not regard automatically, or even presumptively, anti-Semitic any non-Jew who expresses concern, mistakenly or not, about Israeli triumphalism or expansionism. There are many, perhaps most, hasidim who are anti-Zionist; they are certainly not anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish. I think non-Jews should have the same privilege. I have often been accused of anti-Catholic bias because I oppose some positions taken by the Catholic Church. I have always considered this unfair, and I think it unfair when it works the other way.

What I do regard as the major problem confronting the American Jewish community is to maintain a healthy balance between universalism and self-interest. My fear is that under the banner of ethnicity—which is something entirely different from cultural pluralism—we are in danger of marching towards parochialism and polarization. Stephen Wise used to say that while he was an American for 70 years he was a Jew for three thousand. This was true; but it was no less true that he was a human being for thousands of years longer than either.

7. The major issue confronting the United States on the international scene is the achievement and maintenance of permanent peace; on the domestic scene, the conquering of poverty and the elimination of inequality.

Thirteen Years Later

EDGAR ROSENBERG

THE SAME MAIL WHICH BRINGS YOUR LETTER OF *mandamus* happens to bring a journal published by the Institute of Jewish Affairs, in which a friendly colleague in Sheffield has a capital

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piece on John Buchan's racist novels. I do my duty by Buchan's nauseating little-Kipling Anglo-heroics and leaf through the rest of the journal. Documentary articles on neo-Nazi reactions to the Yom Kippur War: on anti-Semitism in Austria. A writer for a proto-Nazi paper in the U.S. talks about the "kosher imbroglio" (how the phrase reeks of Pound!) into which "the Israeli bandit state" inevitably erupted, and he concludes that America, with Kissinger in charge of Nixon, is "governed by the lowest conceivable political whores who have sold themselves body and soul to the Jews." (A 50-year-old jingle buzzes in my brain: "*Knallt ab den Walther Rathenau/Die gottverdammte Judensau!*") Meanwhile, in Austria, the man at the top, the Jew chancellor, precisely by being where he is, serves elderly Nazis the antiseptic purpose of absolving them of their whilom complicities—as if all the votes for Kreisky could ever again sweeten their hands. Outside, beyond the polling places, the merry residents crowd the lessons of two wars into one joke: "If we go short of petrol, we'll simply have to burn all the Jews;" and then there is the Austrian bishop, defending a ritual-murder play on the ground that "it provides jolly entertainment for the people." But that was back in the Middle Ages—1954—and Vienna is not the world.—I read these things and, like the exemplary anti-Semite in Mann's *Magic Mountain*, who finds Jews under every bed, I turn into the exemplary Jew, who smells the rats *loco citato*.

Clearly, it is idle to pretend that anti-Semitism has finally had its day and we can start talking about something else, if you don't mind; to ignore its resurgence in its most cynical and pernicious forms is to promote its roaring trade by default. It may all have been very well for old Leonard March in Snow's *Conscience of the Rich* to grouse, "I wish the Jews/Would stop making News"—virtually my own position in the palmy days of the *Commentary* symposium, without Leonard's excuse of lingering in stubborn senescence in the afterglow of Bloomsburydom. Back in '61, I could still subscribe to all that trendy twaddle about "cultural pluralism" as an article of faith; but 13 years later a kind of hardnosed collective egotism has been foisted on the Jews—I am talking about American Jews—by two obtrusive commonplaces: the wars in Zion and the god-awful friction between Jews and Negroes, who are kinned to the Arabs by both natural and elective affinities and regard the Holy Land as an ethnic and political affront. (A phrase like "the Israeli bandit state," though it appears in a white-supremacist paper, could easily be found in any mainlining Negro journal.) At the same time, I suspect that, for all the fighting truculence which the Negro opposition has provoked among Jews—our notorious obstinacy *redivivus*,—a lot of Jews find this "confrontation" (how the jargon rises to one's lips) above anything else *embarrassing*, probably because we haven't learned how to deal with a situation in which we are asked to reconcile our instinctive

loyalties with our reasonable social impulses and feel that the Blacks are forcing an impossible choice on us. (Nietzsche-contra-Jesus: "It is inhuman to bless when one is being cursed.") Besides, we keep congratulating ourselves in the most imbecile way on all those Negro Charity Balls of ours, our philanthropism-à-la-mode, accordingly feel "cheated," and forget that by reminding the Blacks of their Most-Favored status among us all these years we commit at best a diplomatic blunder, at worst a crass insult. (Limping analogy: at age 13, as the only white in an all-black school—this was in ante-bellum Haiti—I alone, *le petit blanc*, found myself uniquely exempt from corporal punishment, as if this flagrant distinction were less humiliating than to be whipped along with everybody else in class.) This leaves a small group of Jews, *tertium quid*, who find the hostility of the Blacks neither threatening nor embarrassing but feel that Israel's claims to statehood are so much obsolete rubbish, and isn't it time to give the doddering idea of nationalist supremacy a state burial. I should say that a good many young radicals share this view. But, for the moment at least, the pro-Israeli hawks seem to be out front, with certain weighty consequences. Back in '61 (and before that in the Symposium of the Elders conducted in '44 by the Stepan Verkhovenskys among Jewish Intellectuals) we talked cultural pluralism; now we have the Jewish Defense League.

How I could claim in print 13 years ago that Israel meant just nothing to me, now boggles my mind; so do affiliated phenomena. Parables, stand by: a London-based novelist-friend reminded me the other day that on a visit to Stanford in 1956 he asked me about the presence of Zionists on the West Coast and that I stared at him as if he were talking about unicorns, or the snakes in Ireland. Then I remembered that, 10 years later, a fledgling member of the Cornell faculty wondered about the visibility of Negroes in downtown Ithaca and that I gave him precisely the same blank look I'd given our man at Stanford. By now, of course, my quondam bedevilment bedevils me. Foresight is not among my strong points.

Nor, strictly speaking, is hindsight. In reading over what I have written so far, I find myself namedropping Pound, Mann, Snow, Nietzsche, Dostoyevski instead of Maimonides, Philo, Josephus, Emden, Mendelssohn, Ephraim Moses Kuh, Judah Loew ben Bezalel (who they?); evidently, the old pluralism dies hard. While the headlining actualities of the year—the guns over Syria, the Panovs in custody, the barriers of Schoenau—while all these things have created a growing sense of collective Jewish consciousness, American Jews (take us all in all) remain appallingly ignorant of Jewish history, Jewish culture, the ethics of the fathers. Let us praise famous men like Lukacs and Edmund Wilson but leave Graetz and Dubnow to the specialists. Our innocence of current events may not be so immaculate as that of the Swiss who, when

asked the name of their head of state, have to consult a reference work; but ask any educated Black the names and dates and events which compose the history of his race, and he will instantly put to shame the average educated Jew who, though he may have heard of the Dreyfus Affair, hasn't heard of Shabbetai Zevi, let alone Bar Kokhba; who may remember the more tuneful parts of the Haggadah because he's been to a Seder but knows nothing about halakhah, confuses Midrash with the king whose food turned to gold and Galut with a town in Lower Austria, and to whom the name Hillel suggests only a National Organization, with Houses. In this respect, we haven't made much headway since '61. Still we've made some. Whereas in '61 we were too ignorant to reflect on our ignorance, at least we're slowly becoming aware—even slightly ashamed—of it. The increasing demand for Jewish Studies in the colleges, for example, is one manifestation of this. I may as well confess that I, myself, regard this trend with a certain queasiness, partly because it forces me to learn, as it were, a brand-new alphabet, partly because it may ultimately foster a form of separatism as prejudicial to our "interests" as so many -isms have been. But I am perfectly well aware that our ignorance of our ancestors will not justify us to our posterity.

The need to pull ourselves together, which the lessons of the past have forced on us, is reflected, too, in the steadily mounting concern with intermarriage as a threat to our ethnic stability. As somebody who himself has been "intermarried" for 9 years—my wife was raised as a Danish Lutheran—I naturally look down on all that publicity, from the lofty position of the insider, as so much uninstructed ballyhoo, convinced that anybody who hasn't shared my experience doesn't know what he is talking about. Speaking *ad hominem* (though I daresay virtually all intermarried Jews feel this way) I regard intermarriage as I should any other marriage, a condition compounded of noisy vibratos and dull obbligatories, hours of boredom and sullen silence, shared secrecies and acquired usages to which no third party can be privy—that, in fact, there is no such thing as intermarriage, only marriage. Still, the thing gives rise to occasionally weird side-issues. (My calling them side-issues defines their triviality in my scale of values.) For example, though both sets of parents entirely approved of the match, they raised (parenthetically) the same arguments which are now being debated from the pulpit and in print: my father-in-law, an occasional Lutheran and consenting freemason, dimly objected that by marrying me, his daughter was guilty of sapping the fine gritty integrity of the Jews and contributing to their historical erosion; my mother, unobservingly but sentimentally Jewish, trounced me for taking unfair advantage of my wife by subjecting her to a Jewish wedding service. Nor should I care to forget a certain Fru L***, a neighbour and client of my Danish in-laws, a Greek Orthodox lady, Danish by birth and repatriated after wasting sour

decades in Poland, who, after spotting me on the stairs, rang up my future mother-in-law to rhapsodize over that lovely Indian boy her daughter was engaged to marry; once the confusion was pointed out to her, the woman let loose such a shocking torrent of billingsgate—a Jew! how could you! what are you doing to your daughter!—that my father-in-law, grabbing the phone, told the woman in icy anger to keep out of his affairs and his house. (Next day, Fru L***'s brother appeared on the doorstep to offer apologies, offered them in the formal and soothing syllables of one who expresses condolences.)

But that, again, is another matter: clearly, Fru L*** (anyhow, not exactly the typical Dane) spat, not on intermarriage, but on that on which Antonio spat. The woman saw the cloven foot beneath the Jewish gabardine: lo, *une religieuse*. As for us: at a time when Jewishness seems to have gone solidly into politics, I notice little or nothing of a religious boom around me. Sometimes I think that I am the last of the Mohicans. The year 1974 finds me on Sabbatical in London, hidden away in a sunless two-room basement flat; it is Sabbath morning when your letter arrives, and since I don't write or open mail on the Sabbath (though I switch the lights on and off, boil eggs, drive a car and do nearly everything which the Law quite explicitly forbids me to do), my wife—my steady shabbat-goy—breaks the mail open for me. My Jewish friends (crudely half of my friends are Jews) judge these professions of faith, which are exhausted by cracked observances of the sabbatarian and lukewarm obedience to the dietary laws as outright idiocy, *une espèce de sottise*, a tic, an allergy, a disorder of the bile and nervous system, Edgar Rosenberg's lingering *meshuggas*. I have long given up justifying these things to myself, except as vestiges of habit or of superstition, as something I have always done, so I can't stop now or something terrible will happen. At bottom, I darkly convict myself of soggy efforts to bribe Jehovah, darkly suspecting that He has all along seen through the laodicean salesmanship and won't buy any of my bogus merchandise. The laughter of my friends is incorrigible; but so are my acts. And, insofar as my innate and instinctual Jewishness, that state of disgrace into which I was born, remains the critical point in all this, I do not wish to leave the impression that all the political and ideological forces which have acted on me in the recent past have wrought miraculous conversions. But I also know that the passage of 13 years has left me a more fractious and a moodier Jew than I used to be in the early sixties, when thoughtlessness was cheaply bought and, writing from the cloudless heights of Leverett Towers, I could have sworn my wits were glib and clear, and life ran gaily as the sparkling Charles.

Moral Witness and Political Commitment

JOEL ROSENBERG

I RECENTLY ATTENDED A LECTURE BY A PROMINENT Los Angeles rabbi on the subject of the growing trend of political conservatism in the American Jewish community. He presented the statements and activities of eight or ten well-known writers and academicians of the Jewish community, and cited such problems as: (1) the pre- and post-Watergate support of Nixon by Jews concerned about Israel, (2) Jewish opposition to integration of neighborhoods and schools, and to equal-opportunity employment and college admissions, (3) Jewish backlash against the anti-war activities of Jewish students. While I found myself firmly on the liberal side of the fence on these issues (i.e., anti-Nixon, pro-integration/equal opportunity, and anti-war), I also found myself concerned about the dangerous oversimplifications inherent in the rabbi's eloquent sermonic style. I, along with the bulk of his audience, needed his message, welcomed his admonition. But I was uncomfortable with his method of applying the criterion of individual conscience to complex social issues. The rabbi, in the tradition of the great social protest movements of the 1960's, was calling us as *individuals* to the act of *witness*. It was a stirring plea, replete with a rich fabric of quotations and homilies from the Bible and Talmud, but something was missing; it inspired without moving to action. It called upon the best and noblest sentiments in our tradition; but it failed to make the tradition *workable*. I recalled that the Biblical admonition, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 22:21), was addressed in the second-person *plural*. It was, therefore, a call not to an individual posture of moral witness but to a collective program, an *institutional* response to injustice. In this sense, the progressive strand of American Jewry, those who have fought for equal opportunity and against the war in Vietnam, are, perhaps, sadly lacking in political know-how—for they have failed to make clear to themselves and others how, if at all, the short-term gains of progressive causes fit into the long-term welfare of the Jewish community. More important (for the lessons of history tell us that such long-term insight is not always possible), they have failed to concentrate energy and hard thinking on the revamping of Jewish communal institutions, to help make concern for progressive change in American (and, if I may presume to say, Israeli) society and a collective (and thereby a thoroughly *Jewish*) responsibility. In this sense, the more intelligent conservative voices in the Jewish community may be ahead of the progressives. If we purge away

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from conservative arguments the cheap invocations of the Holocaust—the shrill and paralyzing cries of “Never again!”—we are left with the serious reminder that to be Jewish is to think collectively and realistically; to be Jewish is to make the voice of the prophets not only audible but workable.

I hope that I am pleading for a far-reaching kind of radicalism. I find hope in small signs—the activities of the Boston *bet-din*, who applied halakhic thinking to certain serious local social problems; the growth of *havurot* in this country as alternatives to the synagogue; the circulation of a “New Halakhah” newsletter; the growing concern for equal rights and equal religious responsibilities for Jewish women; a possible renaissance of arts and culture in the younger Jewish community; growing contacts between Arabs and Jews to search for peaceful alternatives in the Middle East; agitation for concern about the Jewish aged and poor; and so on. There *are* ways out of the suburban isolationism of the Jewish community. But those ways must become a matter of collective policy. And that requires a long and painstaking process of re-education.

The rabbi’s talk made me realize how schizophrenic I am, and that is why this symposium is a good place to take stock again of where I stand. I cannot disavow the importance of moral witness. During the Vietnam War I was a conscientious objector, a position I regarded as a form of moral witness. “In a place where there is no *mentsch*,” says the *Pirke Avot*, “strive to be a *mentsch*.” But moral witness unsupplemented by hard thinking and conscientious teaching is an empty gesture. The schizophrenia is built into our tradition. The coexistence of halakhah (legal thought and decision) and aggadah (myth and moral homily) throughout the Talmud and throughout Jewish history illustrates the perpetually painful dilemma that is the historical birthright of the Jew. We are bidden by our teachers to live simultaneously in this world and the World to Come. Abandonment of one or the other is an abandonment of Jewish identity.

No right minded Jew can any longer stomach the possibility of an “expedient” collaboration with America’s present political leadership. That is the historical lesson of 1973–1974. But it must be tempered by the historical lesson of 1972, that is, the McGovern debacle, the abysmal failure of the short-term gain for progressivism. To bring about a truly progressive commitment to social change is not, however, simply a problem of voting patterns. It is a matter of lifestyle, of culture, of long-term goals, of communal activity on a small scale as well as large.

My interests over the past few years have been what one would call largely non-political. I am involved in teaching Judaica to college students; in adult education; in the writing of poetry and *belles lettres*. So it is strange for me to find myself in this symposium speaking on politi-

cal terms. But any action that is directed at the quality of life is a political act. If I labor to unravel a complex meditation of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, or to discover the symbolism of a tale by Agnon, I will eventually make statements about how people live in this world as members of a society and as participants in a political environment. And the political events of the past two years have further politicized me. A symposium, however, tends to make one's political statements sound prescriptive. This distorts reality. I have deliberately not answered the symposium questions directly. I can point to issues, and indicate the general drift of my concerns. But I live in too complex a social milieu, and one currently undergoing changes too profound for me to speak with any confidence. I see that radicals, progressives and conservatives are at present greatly in need of one another; I see that traditional distinctions between left and right have broken down; and I see that political issues have overflowed into the cultural, religious, and interpersonal spheres. Beyond that—and I say this without envy—I am not that ideal human type mentioned in the Mishnah: *ha-ro'eh et ha-nolad*, he who sees what is coming to birth.

We Need Love and Objectivity

NORMAN ROTH

1. IT IS BY NOW PLATITUDINOUS THAT CLASSICAL Hebrew did not have a particular word to express "religion." Religion, in traditional Jewish terms, was the sanctification of *all* of life (Cynthia Ozick, that remarkable writer and person, has expressed herself much more eloquently on this theme than I could ever hope to, in an article in last year's *Jewish Book Annual*). What religion means *today* is something more problematic. The difficulty, of course, is that "religion" may be investigated from any number of approaches—anthropologically, sociologically, theologically, psychologically, ad infinitum.

I have always been interested in religion on at least two levels: the academic, or analytic approach, to try to understand what religion is, or has been; and the personal, expressive level. I have, thus, followed with interest the studies of Eliade, Herberg, Marty, Berger, and Bellah.

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I have attempted to learn from theologians of all backgrounds, and have been profoundly influenced in my own belief by such apparently disparate views as those of Heschel, Buber, Soloveitchik, Elie Wiesel, and Herman Cohen. I have been gratified to see that Jewish students have become equally excited by these figures and their ideas in classes that I have had the privilege of teaching.

But on a less academic level, religion is something that must be confronted—we are either profoundly moved by that “sense of wonder” of which Heschel spoke, or we feel ourselves lonely and alienated in a deterministic universe and an unloving world. Personally, I often feel that I alternate between the two. As Buber so profoundly pointed out in *The Eclipse of God*, we no longer feel at home in the universe; thus, we are not able to construct those kinds of metaphysical abodes in which our forefathers felt so secure. Buber is, in fact, perhaps the most profoundly significant religious influence in my life—since I honestly believe that I have experienced what he speaks of as “living in relation;” the confrontation of the “I” by a “You.”

2. Having spent three years studying in Israel, and working on a kibbutz, I feel a rather strong attachment. As a Jew, I find that I have the deep love for the Land and the strong sense of pride in the accomplishments of the State which characterize most Jews. At the same time, having lived there, I can temper this love with a certain sense of objectivity. I find myself highly critical of some of the ways of life in Israel and, especially, of a kind of narrow provincialism in much of Israeli thinking. There is prejudice and discrimination in Israel—towards Arab citizens, Palestinians, Sefardic Jews, Rumanian Jews, and Americans in general. One of the most serious issues is the intolerance of the Orthodox and, especially, of the rabbinate. The problems with regard to non-Orthodox religious rights in Israel are too well known to require comment, but perhaps most American Jews are not equally aware of the intolerance, and even bigotry, which characterizes the attitudes of the multitude of Orthodox factions towards each other. *Ahavat Yisrael*—the basic respect and love for the Jewish people—is almost a neglected element in the religious life of Israel today. This, together with the serious political problems (internal and external), must be the major issue with which Israel will have to come to terms in the immediate future.

4. The future of Jewish life in America is a very serious concern. I read with a tremendous sense of sadness the expressions of great hope for the American Jewish community in the years just before, and especially after, the Holocaust. What has become of these hopes? The richest and most comfortable Jewish community in the history of our people, lacking none of the opportunities which were usually denied to Jews everywhere else, has apparently opted for the green pastures of assimilation. We have produced a monstrous complex of bureaucracies to “go-

vern" a Jewish community which exists in name only. The only thing capable of uniting Jewish support and arousing responsible Jewish concern in America is another crisis in Israel. Unless American Jews wake up to the fact that they do not exist only for the purpose of providing financial support to Israel (worthy and vital as such support is), there may be real concern for our future.

Perhaps the one encouraging sign that we have seen in recent years has been the growth of Jewish concern on college campuses. While the Hillel Foundations are gasping with their last breath, in need only of a decent burial, various "alternative" Jewish lifestyles have been explored—resulting in such things as the "Havurah" movement, a more or less vital Jewish student press, *Response* magazine, and the like. It remains to be seen how long any of these will survive, of course, and what influences they will exert on future Jewish life. More significant are the growing numbers of Jewish studies programs at colleges and universities offering a full range of courses in the varied aspects of Jewish culture and tradition. To the credit of the much-maligned "Jewish establishment," it is beginning to respond by providing some financial support in the way of scholarship, fellowships, funds for libraries, and awards for travel and study in Israel.

5. Jewish ritual observance and expression is a serious problem today, as witnessed by the admirable attempts of the Reform movement to find some meaningful expression in this area. On college campuses this is also something of a concern. Class schedules and the pressures of study do not usually permit the leisure of traditional observance of Shabbat and holidays—yet attendance at High Holy Day services is at capacity, and at least respectable at other holidays. Personally, I have not yet found a satisfactory pattern for the expression of Jewish ritual in my own life. At this point, I am afraid I part company with Buber—who did not feel the need for rituals. There is great value in symbol and in participation in tradition. Sometimes I find services meaningful and expressive, though I am afraid I must confess that this is rare. I long for the warmth and commitment of the *shtibel* (such as can still be found in places in New York)—but without the intolerance and rigidity that characterizes so many Orthodox people.

6. The major problem confronting the Jewish community in America today seems to me to be education. Though I have mentioned the encouraging aspects of college Jewish studies programs, I would point out that few students are adequately prepared to handle these courses. Only a handful can read the Bible, Hebrew poetry, literature, or historical sources. Education should be the chief priority of the Jewish community.

What It Means To Be Jewish

HARRY SLOCHOWER

I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS MYSELF TO THE QUESTIONS in terms of their over-all import for Jews as well as for the entire human community. Let me begin with some autobiographical data which have bearing on my stand.

I was born in Bukowina, a small multi-national state of the old multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire and came here at the age of thirteen, one year before the outbreak of the First World War. I was raised in the Jewish tradition and at first lived on the lower Manhattan Jewish East side. While my parents were alive, I participated in religious rituals. Pesah, in particular, was a heart-warming and joyous family gathering. Now, the family is dispersed and I no longer observe any of the religious rituals. Yet, today, I feel more than ever that I am a Jew. For me, then, being Jewish is not related to being religious. It is, rather, an expression of the heart and spirit, probably reaching back to deeply buried unconscious roots.

Two historic events cemented this feeling for me: Hitlerism and the recent Yom Kippur attack. For some years, prior to 1933, I wanted to think of myself as "assimilated" and let my gentile neighbors think that I was "an Austrian." Hitlerism shocked me into acknowledgment that "*I exist*"—as a Jew—and mobilized my deepest emotions that I was *glad* (rather than "proud") to be a Jew. This feeling was re-enforced by the Arab threat to destroy the physical base of a "home-land."

I stated that, for me, being Jewish was an emotional and psychic condition. But, as an educator, writer and psychoanalyst, I have also drawn on two principles which define my identification as a Jew. Briefly they are:

1. A critical, questioning temper. This temper begins with Hebraic prophetic literature, most eloquently expressed in The Book of Job, and appearing in Jewish writers, such as Marx, Freud, Kafka and Ernst Bloch (whom I "introduced" in JUDAISM, Winter 1972). This attitude has been acclaimed by non-Jews as well, by Thorstein Veblen who valued Judaism as "a disturber of the intellectual peace," and by the Jesuit philosopher, Jacques Maritain, who likened Judaism to "an activating ferment" that "stimulates the movement of history." And, in his monumental epic, *Joseph and His Brothers*, Thomas Mann celebrates this Hebraic *Geist* as the condition for creativity.

2. The second principle is the quest for communal alignment with our own people and, beyond that, with all peoples. This longing is a dialectical "corrective" of our historic alienation. It is expressed in sacred

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Hebrew writing, where we are enjoined that "the stranger that sojourneth will you shall be unto you as the home-born among you . . . for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt." The conjunction of these two principles prevents dissidence from being narrowed to mere opposition, and fraternity from becoming coordination.

Many have lulled themselves into believing that Israel's existence is assured by America's military assistance. Such thinking is myopic. It overlooks the crucial role of economic motives in *the competition* between America and Russia for Mid-Eastern hegemony. Neither of the two superpowers can allow either Israel or the Arabian states to be wholly victorious, lest the condition for their respective dependence on these powers be eliminated. Hence, it is not surrealistic to envision that, should American economic policy shift towards "friendship" with the Arabian oil magnates, Russia might lean towards the side of Israel. We need to remember that Russia once assisted in the recognition of Israel as a state—again partly for economic reasons.

From a broader perspective, the threat to Israel and the world lies in a disproportionate reliance on the modern *Golem*—technical power. Now, America does not have the age-old memory of agrarianism which other peoples have, and has developed something like an idolatry of gadgets and push-button efficiency. And technics is the Moloch and Cancer of our day with the probability that the Bomb may "guide" us towards a cosmic Black Death. (We should recall that it was the American military machine which was the first and, thus far, the only one to explode the Bomb.)

Some see the resolution of the Jewish problem in assimilation. But, aside from the consideration that this would rub out our unique identity, assimilation does not even ensure the reduction of anti-Semitism. This was shown dramatically in the fate of "German" Jews under Hitler. Indeed, the Nazis dealt more savagely with them than they did with the *Ostjuden*, who did not try to pass as Germans.

Now, we must keep intact the core of Jewish identity, not allow ourselves to disappear in a "melting pot," not live as "other-directed" people. To maintain our dignity, we must labor for the preservation of our cultural and spiritual identity *within* democratic participation in the life of our respective national communities. Indeed, the condition for a genuine unity of people is for each to keep alive its distinctive psychic consciousness. We must guard our ancient folk-roots from being eroded; we must not allow ourselves to be reduced to a neuter denominator.

To be sure, Israel cannot go it alone; but neither can it go, in the long run, with American armor or expanded territories. The greatest danger which faces an individual and a nation is that of becoming complacent, of allowing fatness to grow around the heart. The Yom Kippur

attack, now followed by signs of American-Arabian détente, should shake us out of complacency and towards a reawakening of Israel's spiritual heritage.

Israel once lived in tents and its history begins with exile, as Erich Kahler put it. Exile begets critical consciousness as well as a yearning for harmony with others, a longing to be treated as a *Mensch*. The author of the book of Job calls Job "a man," rather than a Hebrew. Here lies the living idea of Judaism. In the poetic lines of Bialik:

There are abandoned corners of our Exile . . .
Where still in secret burns our ancient light . . .

Jews cannot go back to living in tents or continue to draw sustenance from an exiled condition. To preserve our identity, it is all the more urgent to nourish "the Jewish way of life." For some it may needs entail observing its rituals. And this way depends on the existence of Israel as a physical bastion and as a psychic condition for our being able to say and be glad to say "I exist" as a Jew, that is, as one particular noble expression of being human.

Not Standing—Wrestling

ARTHUR I. WASKOW

I FEEL MY OWN HEART MOST JEWISH AND FEEL myself living most fully in the heart of Jewishness, when I am wrestling with Torah and Talmud in the midst of the Fabrangen community in Washington (and of other communities in the "havurah" movement). Out of that wrestle/study, and my continuous effort to understand the world we live in as Torah would teach us, emerge the ways I try to act and think micro- and macro.

—Learning Tanakh Hebrew and learning to *davven* (with all my sinews, not just my tongue).

—Helping teach a "Sunday Heder" for a dozen children, including my "own," who learn to wrestle with Torah, to dance/mime the Torah stories and psalms, to sing, to make mezuzot and talleisim.

—Reexamining questions of the food that I, the havurot, the Jew-

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ish community, the United States, and, perhaps, the world should be eating in the light of Torah-teaching about food: not only kashrut in the narrow sense, but also how the poor should be fed, how the food industry should be structured and controlled, how farm-workers and other food-workers should be treated, how the land that produces food should be dealt with, etc.

—Seeing the struggle to make a just peace between Israelis and Arabs in the light of the Torah story of Yishmael and Yizhak, reexamined and newly understood.

—Going far beyond the debates over whether women should be counted in the minyan, etc., to assume that women ought to be, and are becoming, fully involved as equals in all aspects of Jewish life and that what has traditionally been called “womanly” within men and “manly” within women is being liberated, and then seeking to “hear” what transformed spiritual and organizational forms of Jewish life should flow from that emerging reality.

—Trying to understand the cataclysms of our (Jews’ and all humans’) recent past and impending future in the light of the Messianic tradition, and trying to hear God’s will as to what a “Halakhah oriented to *Mashiah*” might be.

Taking the last item first, since it encompasses the most territory in the most economical language: the Messianic tradition, read along with the Eden tradition, seems to teach that “in those days” there will be great transformations from war to peace; from toil and exploitation to decent work and sharing; from war between Nature and Humanity to peace between them; from the subjugation of women to equality and role-liberation for women and men; from agony and exile for Am Yisrael to a holy autonomy in Erez Yisrael. These are precisely the aspects of human life that now seem in unprecedented upheaval. Is the great choice between planetary death and *Mashiah* now facing us?

If so, do these choices on the level of relations between human beings point to analogous choices in the sphere of relations between human beings and God—choices in spiritual life between rigidity and flow-iness, alienation and wholeness? Can we create Jewish communities that prefigure *Mashiah-zeit* by living without violence, with liberation of all to be full persons, with shared work and incomes, at peace with nature, developing new forms of spiritual life—and thus help create the great *tshuvah* to which God will want to respond by sending *Mashiah*?

But the problem of Israelis-and-Arabs is more salient in the minds of most Jews than the Messianic vision. Here, too, I would say that Tanakh teaches us. Begin with Yishmael—expelled from Avraham’s family because he was *mezahek* toward Yizhak. The rabbis have for centuries wrestled with this mockery of a word: does it mean that Yishmael was murderous, idolatrous, incestuous? I would focus on the word’s

form: the fact that it is from the same root as Yizhak. The laughter laughed-at: Yizhak's identity beclouded as in a misty mirror—very like, yet unlike. If Yizhak was to grow up to his own self, must Yishmael be out of sight? And just so the Palestinians today—must we make them invisible to us precisely because they are most like us—longing for the same land, suffering/making-it in the same kind of Diaspora? Is there no other way to clarify our identity, to deal with the dangerous Yishmael within us, than either to expel him to the desert—or to become Yishmael?

We have learned, for Yom Kippur, not to send our sin-goat into the desert but to beat upon the door of our own hearts to find sin there and correct it; could we discover the Yishmael within us and correct it? Could we deal differently with the Children of Yishmael than by sending them into the desert, invite them to deal differently with us than by raising the fist against us? Can new midrash teach us, at both the political and the psychological-spiritual levels, how to transform our own violence and our relations with the violence of the Arabs? Can we accept as urgent the Torah prophecy that Yishmael *will* come to dwell in the presence of his brothers?

The hope that God-wrestling, Torah-wrestling—not simply accepting the tradition, not simply rejecting it, but always wrestling with it—the hope that this process can teach us how to act in all the spheres of life is the hope that informs and transforms my own life.

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Conversion “According to Halakhah”—What Is It?

ELIEZER BERKOVITS

1.

OUR CONCERN HERE IS NOT WITH THE POLITICAL issues, struggles, and bickerings that are usually associated with the title of this essay. Strictly speaking, our chief interest here is not even with the question of conversion. What we intend to discuss is the meaning of the term, *al pi halakhah*, according to *halakhah*. We shall use the problem of conversion in the State of Israel, which has embroiled us so long and generated so much bitterness among Jews, as an example to illustrate the fundamental problem of *halakhah* in our days.

The *din*, the law, regarding conversion is really very simple. For a conversion in accordance with the *din* there has to be *kabbalat ol mizvot*, the acceptance of the commandments of the Torah; in the case of a male convert there has to be circumcision, and finally there has to be *t'vilah*, immersion in the ritual bath. The requirements of the law in this matter are clear. There is no problem there. The problem, of course, is that while there is the *din* as stated in the Talmud and crystallized in the codes there are also a great many Jews who either do not accept the Talmud as the ultimate authority for their own religious conscience or who give to the law regarding conversion an interpretation which differs widely from the one given to it by Orthodox Judaism. The real question, therefore, is not what does the *Shulhan Arukh* say about conversion. That is well known. The question is what to do about all the Jews who do not accept the Orthodox view in this matter. It makes little sense to argue that since the unity of the Jewish people is at stake, all Jews must accept the Orthodox viewpoint. It makes no sense at all; not because the question of conversion is not *that* important. It is of vital importance to us all. We are dealing here with the very essence of the nature and meaning of Jewishness. It makes no sense because in this way we shall not safeguard the unity of the Jewish people. On the contrary, the gap widens and the essential nature of being a Jew becomes more and more diluted for more and more Jews. One might, perhaps, retort: we are not concerned with the practical consequences. Here is the law; we insist that it be adhered to. But would this still be a halakhic position? Is it, indeed, so, that authentic *halakhah* is free of meaningful practical considerations? We shall yet come back to this later in our discussion.

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Apart from the practical considerations, there is also a moral question to be raised. By insisting that in matters of conversion the Orthodox view must prevail exclusively, we have, of course, stated that our rather numerous non-Orthodox brothers and sisters have to be excluded from having any say in such a vital issue as what it means to be a Jew. Do we have the moral right to make such demands? It is true that we maintain that Torah is *min hashamayim*, revealed to the Jewish people by God and, therefore, the law regarding conversion has divine authority? I, too, believe that, together with all Orthodox Jews. Nevertheless, I cannot overlook the fact that, no matter how strongly I believe it, it is still only my personal belief. And if there are tens of thousands of us who so believe, the faith in Torah *min hashamayim* will still remain *our* belief. No matter how convincing our reasons and our proofs for the faith may be for us, they will still be no more than reasons and proofs *for us*; enough for me, clear and convincing, like the brilliance of a clear and cool morning, yet inseparable from my subjectivity. It is true that our opinion in this matter of conversion is identical with that of the *g'dolei Torah*, the great Torah scholars of our generation. But, again, this, too, is our recognition of their greatness. If we should be mistaken, if the great Torah scholars themselves should be mistaken, then the greatness of the *g'dolim* itself would be wanting and of little consequence. But, of course, we are right, our faith is true, and the greatness of the "great ones" is unquestionable. Indeed—so *we* believe. That Torah is *min hashamayim* so I believe; but I cannot help recognizing that the fact that I so believe does not make my belief a faith *min hashamayim*. The Torah is *min hashamayim*; my faith that is so is not; neither is my interpretation of the meaning and consequences of that faith *min hashamayim*. If so, how can we deny to Conservative and Reform rabbis and scholars the right to their interpretation? Of course, we Orthodox are the only Torah-true Jews. But no matter how much we insist on this, it will, nevertheless, remain our own subjective insistence. Could not, then, our non-Orthodox brothers and sisters turn to us and say with equal right, since our interpretation of Torah and Judaism is mistaken, that we do not represent Torah-true Judaism and that only theirs is the Torah-true way?

Of course, an Orthodox Jew might say: I don't care what *they* maintain. I have my own convictions and I shall not depart from the letter in the *Shulhan Arukh* regarding conversion *khut hasa'arah*, not as much as the breadth of a hair. Indeed, one does have the right to such a decision. But, for the sake of intellectual honesty, one should have a proper understanding of the meaning of such a decision. In a sense, in its ultimate consequences, this would be a decision of seceding from community with non-Orthodox Jews or excluding them from community with us. Or, to say the least, it would be a decision regarding the rights

and status of our non-Orthodox brothers and sisters within the community of Israel. However, if this is fully understood, we will have to concede that this is no longer a question purely of conversion, but of the importance of the unity of the Jewish people, the idea of *klal Yisrael*, in relationship to the laws of conversion. How to convert to Judaism is not a halakhic problem. It is all stated clearly in the *Shulḥan Arukh*.

The problem is that in this case the prescribed laws on conversion are in conflict with another important principle of Judaism, that of preserving the unity of Israel, the idea of *k'neset Yisrael*, with the obligation of *ahavat Yisrael*, the love for the people of Israel. Only when we understand this, have we raised the halakhic question. For, indeed, such is the classical halakhic problematics, i.e., that the strict adherence to one law is in conflict with the strict adherence to another law and obligatory principle of Judaism. We repeat, then: in the case on hand, any Orthodox Jew has the right to say that, for him, the importance of the laws of *gerut* (conversion) are so vital that for their sake he will push aside all the important obligations regarding the ideal of *klal Yisrael* and *ahavat Yisrael*. But where does he find the authoritative basis for his decision? In the *Shulḥan Arukh* on *hilkhot gerim*, in the section on conversion? Certainly not! There he will find all the rules on how to convert a non-Jew. What he will not find there is the answer to our problem of halakhah, i.e., in view of the importance of the idea of *klal Yisrael* and all that it involves. For Torah-true Judaism, what should be our attitude to a vast number of fellow Jews who do not observe the laws on conversion as we do? Where, then, will he find the answer to his question, in which book, in which code? In no book, in no code. He must make this decision by himself, in his own heart, in his own Jewish conscience. But how so? He will accept the authoritative validity of the law on conversion, at the same time that he will acknowledge the importance of the reality of *klal Yisrael* and *ahavat Yisrael* and will then seek a resolution of the conflict from the source and the quality of the comprehensive ethos of Judaism, from what Judaism is about in its totality, according to his understanding and commitment. Moreover, this is an understanding and commitment which has grown into a measure of maturity as the result of the dedicated study of the classical sources of Judaism and of adherence to a way of life inseparable from it. This is not a purely subjective decision; but just because of the subjective element involved in it, it will be a truly halakhic solution to a genuinely halakhic problem.

It has now become necessary to give thought to the very essence of halakhah, the nature of the halakhic problem and the characteristic quality of the halakhic solution. Only by dealing with this aspect of our theme do we approach the core of our problem; indeed, not only the specific problem of conversion but the problem of halakhah in the

widest sense in the contemporary situation of the Jewish people. What is halakhah? Halakhah is Torah *she'baal peh*, oral Torah, as distinct from the Bible itself, which is Torah *she'biklav*, the written Torah. In other words, the Bible alone is not enough; the Torah *she'biklav* cannot fulfill the function or the purpose intended by the Torah. Why not? Let us see how halakhah functions, what is the work that halakhah does. Let us look at some quite well-known examples, as well at others less well-known. A very famous case of a halakhic problem and its solution is the case of Hillel's *prosbul*. To put it concisely and perhaps not quite accurately, it was the transformation of private debts, which otherwise, in accordance with the written law of the Bible, would be forfeited in the *sh'mittah* year, into public debts. This was a bold innovation, which Samuel, of a later generation, would have liked to abolish. How and why was it instituted by the great Hillel? He was committed to the law of the *sh'mittah*. But, in his time, this law came into conflict with other valid concerns of Judaism. On the one hand, there was a Torah obligation to protect the interest of the poor who, as the seventh year was approaching, could not receive any loans for fear that in the *sh'mittah* year the money would be lost. On the other hand, there was also the important practical consideration for the effective functioning of the economic process within society; also a valid concern of Judaism. Rab Hisda expressed the meaning of the term *prosbul* into the etymologically monstrous, yet essentially correct interpretation: *pros bulee u'butee*, an ordinance in the interest of the poor and the rich (T. B. *Gittin*, 36/b and 37/a). Where did Hillel find the authority for his innovation? Where was it written in the Torah? It was, of course, not found in any text, in any code. He found it within himself. There was a clash between equally valid laws, principles, and concerns of the Torah. He had to find a resolution to the conflict. There was no text, no Torah *she'biklav* to tell him which course to follow. He could find the solution to the problem within his own understanding of the comprehensive ethos of Judaism as he was able to gather it in his own heart and in his own conscience from the totality of the Torah-teaching and the Torah-way of life.

Let us consider another example. According to the written law of the Bible, two witnesses are required in order to establish a fact in court. Yet, in the case of a husband who has disappeared, the teachers of the Talmud accepted the testimony of one witness alone in order to prove the death of the husband in order to allow the wife to remarry. How could they rule in this manner against an explicit law of the Torah? There are all kinds of interpretations for this bold innovation. (See, *Tosafot*, *Yevamot*, 88/a; the commentary of Rashi in *Shabbat* or the *Novellae* of the *Ritba*, ad loc.) However the technicality of the ruling may be explained, the decisive motivation for the ruling was, as it is

clearly stated in the Talmud (T.B. *Yevamot*, 88/a): *m'shum aguna akeelu boh rabbanan*, meaning: in order to save the wife from the status of an *agunah*, i.e., from being a woman tied, to the end of her days, to a man who has disappeared, they applied the law leniently to her case. Once again, it is the authentic halakhic problem situation. There is the written law of the Bible, but this time it is in conflict with another obligation of the Torah-true Jew, the care and concern for a woman whose husband has disappeared. Once again, there was no written code to consult. On the basis of the rabbis' understanding of the overriding Torah-purpose formulated nowhere explicitly, but absorbed into their own consciousness as the result of a life of dedication and commitment to Torah and its living realization, they gave the answer, a halakhic solution to a halakhic problem.

The examples are innumerable. For instance, the case of Rabba bar Bar Hana who had hired some workers to carry some barrels of wine. Somehow, the workers broke the barrels and the wine was lost. Whereupon Rabba took away their clothes as a guarantee for, or in lieu of, damages, which he thought he was entitled to. They brought the case for adjudication before Rab, who ruled that the clothes were to be returned to the workers. Asked Rabba: "Is this the law?" And the answer was: "Yes! for it is written; 'That you walk in the way of good men.'" The clothes were returned. The workers, however, were not yet satisfied. "We have worked all day and we are hungry," they said, claiming their wages. Ruled Rab: "Go and pay them their wages." Once again Rabba asked: "Is this the law?" and the answer was given: "Yes! For the verse in Proverbs concludes: 'And keep the paths of the righteous.'" (T.B. *Baba Mezia*, 83/a.) Legalistically speaking, Rabba was, of course, right. Such was not the law. But the case before Rab presented one of those characteristically halakhic problems. There was the law of damages. But there was also the obligation to care for the disadvantaged. Once again, the decision was made on the basis of a rabbi's appreciation of the more comprehensive concern of the Torah. Rab's decision was not in accordance with the specific law of damages, but with the total purpose of the Law of the Torah. It was halakhah.

The cases which illustrate the point we are making are numerous in Talmudic literature. We shall conclude with the discussion of two more. In recent times, due to a *cause célèbre* in Israel, the problem of the *mamzer*, of the bastard according to Biblical law, became, for a while, the preoccupation of many of us. Without commenting on the case itself, let us see how certain aspects of the problem were dealt with in the Talmud. There is, for instance, a statement by Rabbi Yohanan, the leading teacher of his time in Erez Yisrael, who swore that he could prove that *mamzerim* were present in a family. According to the law, that would disqualify it from inter-marriage with the "pure" families. Yet, he

refrained from revealing the facts. As he said: "What can I do? Some of the *g'dolei ha'dor*, the great men of this generation, are mingled among them." (T.B. *Kiddushin*, 71/a). The question might well be asked: Who gave Rabbi Yohanan the authority to disregard a Biblical commandment and allow the marriage with members of a family who were, by the law of the Torah, to be excluded from the community? But once again we have before us the typical halakhic problem. There is the law on *mamzerut* in conflict with another law and concern of Judaism, the respect due to *g'dolei ha'dor*, to the great men in Israel, who are bearers and teachers of the Torah, whose function is vital for the preservation of Judaism and the Jewish people. There was no code extant to tell Rabbi Yohanan how to act. On the basis of his total understanding of what Judaism demands of the Jew, he decided not to reveal the facts. In the Talmud, itself, his decision is related to a principle formulated by Rabbi Yizhak: "Once a *mamzer* has 'sunk' into a family, leave him there." The meaning being that even though one could determine which part of the family is "pure" and which is not, do not investigate, do not ferret out the *mamzer*. The principle is further broadened into the rule that if one knows with certainty of a *mamzer* in a family who could be simply singled out, but the case is not generally known, one is not permitted to reveal the truth. One might wonder how such leniency could be justified in the face of a clear Biblical ruling on the exclusion of the bastard and his descendants in all generations from intermingling with the community. Undoubtedly, here, too, Biblical teachings in conflict with each other in a given situation had to be considered. On the one hand, the law on the *mamzer*; on the other, considerations of justice and pity for the innocent bastard and his offspring. (The rabbis in various places had the courage to question the justness of the law regarding the *mamzer*.) Thus, with true halakhic boldness, out of their comprehensive interpretation of Judaism's meaning, they limited the application of the law about the bastard.

We conclude with the discussion of one of the most striking examples of halakhic boldness and independence found in the Talmud. We have in mind the great debate about the *tanur shel Akhnai*, the oven of Akhnai. The subject matter of the debate itself is irrelevant to our discussion. The dispute over the law in this case raged between Rabbi Eliezer the son of Horkenos and the other masters. Since his colleagues did not accept his arguments, the mighty Rabbi Eliezer wrought a number of miracles to prove that he was right. The miracles were disregarded. Finally, a voice from heaven came to the support of Rabbi Eliezer declaring: "What do you want from Rabbi Eliezer? The halakhah is always as he teaches it!" What was there for the rabbis to do? The Talmud continues the story: Rabbi Joshua then stood up and said (quoting from the Bible somewhat out of context): "It is not in

heaven!" (Deut. 30:12). And this explanation is given: Said Rabbi Jeremiah: "What does it mean, 'It is not in heaven'? The Torah has already been given to us on the mountain. We pay no attention, not even to a heavenly voice. Because You (i.e., God) have already written in the Torah at the mountain: 'Decide according to the majority'" (Exodus, 23:2. This, of course, is itself a "halakhic" re-interpretation of the literary meaning of the text.) Needless to say, the second part of the story is no longer about the oven of Akhnai. It is about the confrontation between the divine voice, which the rabbis clearly received, and their own conscience as to what was the right decision in the case of the oven. How did they resolve the confrontation? They beat the divine voice with God's own words, as they understood those words. However, their own personal share in the decision is obvious. For one could have easily argued with Rabbi Joshua: It is true that one should rule in accordance with the majority opinion, but only when the discussion is among men. However, in a debate with God Himself, how dare you rule against God? How, indeed, dare you enter into a debate with Him? Yet, the rabbis did rule against a voice from heaven. Once again, there was a conflict between two demands of the Torah: to obey the heavenly voice or to administer the law in a given case as they were able to understand it. Once again, the conflict was resolved on the basis of a more comprehensive principle which, in the rabbis' own estimation, deserved priority. The story itself finds its charming conclusion as follows: Rabbi Natan met the prophet Elijah (who, in Jewish lore, occasionally walks among the people and reveals himself to them) and asked him, "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do in that hour (of the great debate)?" Said Elijah: "He laughed and exclaimed, 'My children have defeated me, my children have defeated me!'" (T.B. *Baba Mezia*, 59/b). The postscript to the story is decisive. To His own joy, God is overruled. A specific word of God is controlled by a more comprehensive divine command. Therein lies the secret of the creative vitality of the halakhah. We might now formulate it more generally. When, in a given situation, a specific law is in conflict with another law, principle, or concern of the Torah, the specific law may be limited in its application, re-interpreted, adapted, suspended or changed in this one situation but not abolished, by the overruling concern of the total Torah.

We may now be in a better position to understand why the Torah *she'biklav*, the Written Torah, is not enough, why it needed to be completed by a Torah *she'baal peh*, the Oral Torah and why the halakhah could not be anything else but oral teaching. Every written law is somewhat "inhuman." As a code laid down for generations it must express a general idea and abstract principle of what is right, of what is desired by the lawgiver. But every human situation is specific and not general or abstract; in a sense, every human situation is unique. No general law

speaks to the specific situation. The uniqueness of the situation will often call for additional attention by some other principle, which has its validity within the system. Two witnesses are necessary to establish a fact. That rule has general validity. But the woman whose husband has disappeared is in a specific situation. The law of the Torah, itself, calls for responsible care for her specific plight. Resolution can be found only in the totality of the ethos of the law. But no written code can provide the resolution. The code can deal only with the general, not with the specific. Once you write it down as a code you have generalized it. Only the Oral Torah, alive in the conscience of the contemporary teachers and masters, who can fully evaluate the significance of the confrontation between one word of God and another in a given situation, can resolve the conflict with the creative boldness of application of the comprehensive ethos of the Torah to the case. Thus, Torah *she'baal peh* as halakhah redeems the Torah *she'biktav* from the prison of its generality and "humanizes" it. The written law longs for this, its redemption, by the Oral Torah. That is why God rejoices when He is defeated by His children. Such defeat is His victory.

According to an opinion in the Talmud, God concluded His covenant with Israel only on account of the Oral Tradition (T.B. *Gittin*, 60/a). A covenant is a relationship of mutuality. The covenantal relationship could find no expression in the revelation and acceptance of the Torah at Sinai. It was a case, as the Talmud puts it, of *kafah aleihem har k'ghigit*, a law given, imposed. Only in halakhah is the covenant, as mutuality of relationship, fully present. Halakhah is not subjective adjustment at all, (though a specific law may be adjusted, but not for the sake of adjusting to the situation). The very essence of covenantal mutuality cannot be subjectivity; but neither can it be without subjective involvement on both sides. Halakhah is not subjective, but it has a subjectively creative element to it. The halakhist recognizes the will of God as expressed in the Torah; he is wholly committed to the law and the teaching of the Torah. But in the mutuality of the covenant the responsibility has fallen to him, to take upon himself the risk of determining, in the light of the totality of the Torah teaching and Torah living, the manner in which the will of the other party to the covenant is to be realized in a specific situation. Ultimately, he has to do that in the independence of his own Torah-imbued conscience. This is our share in the covenant, the existential component of our participation in it. Loyalty to the Torah, to the divine partner to the covenant, demands that we accept the responsibility, notwithstanding the risk involved in the subjective aspect of our participation. Only thus may the generality and abstractness of the written Torah be transformed into *Torat Hayyim*, its realization in whatever situation Jews may find themselves in the course of history.

3.

Let us now return to the question of conversion "according to halakhah." We have indicated earlier that this is not just a matter of conversion but, rather, the problem of how to decide in the case of a conflict between the laws of conversion and one's Torah-obligation of preserving *ahdut*, the unity of *k'neset Yisrael* and the *mizvah* of *ahavat Yisrael*, the love of all Israel. Only because of the confrontation between two equally binding principles of the Torah do we have an authentic halakhic problem on hand. Is there now any further principle in the totality of the system of Judaism that might be used as the basis for a halakhic solution? One could perhaps make the following suggestion. It is true that the laws of conversion do prescribe that a non-Jew be accepted into Judaism only if he is willing to accept all the commandments of the Torah in all sincerity and if he is circumcized and immersed in the properly prepared ritual bath. Yet, it is also established that if this were not the case, but a person converted without the religious responsibilities having been explained to him, even if he or she undertook this step for the sake of marrying a Jew or a Jewess or for any other ulterior reason, even if the conversion had taken place in the presence of three laymen, ignorant of the laws and teachings of Judaism, the conversion is still valid. Of course, this is allowed only *be'd'eebad* i.e. *post factum*, after the event of conversion had taken place. But *l'khathilah*, as a rule, from the start of the conversion process, it is not permissible. On the other hand, there exists a general principle of halakhah that all cases of need, of urgency, *eyt hazorekh* or *hadhak*, are to be treated as *b'ed'eebad*. In other words, what normally would be admissible only *post factum*, under the pressure of circumstances is allowed *l'khathilah*, from the start. Now, I do not hesitate to say that the preservation of *ahdut Yisrael*, the unity of *klal Yisrael*, and the practice of *ahavat Yisrael* are matters of utmost urgency. With this understanding of the problem, I might well think that a compromise with our non-Orthodox brothers and sisters was possible. I imagine that I would have every right to approach them and talk to them somewhat as follows:

We have our own views on what constitutes genuine conversion and you have yours. We disagree on this point. We shall not force our view on you as you will not force yours on us. But insofar as we are both part of *k'neset Yisrael* and desire to have our place of responsibility in it, we do have in common our concern for the preservation of *klal Yisrael* and are equally motivated by *ahavat Yisrael*. Therefore, in this matter of conversion your problem is very similar to ours. It is not really a question of how to admit a non-Jew into Judaism. It is a "halakhic" problem for you no less than for us, i.e., how to resolve the conflict between your requirements for conversion and your commitment to the reality of *klal Yisrael*. We know well what your *l'khathilah* position on conversion is.

But since this is a case of *eyt hazorekh* and *shaat hadhak*, what would be your *be'd'eebad* position in view of the need for Jewish unity and for the sake of your love for your fellow Jews? In view of the need and the urgency dictated by our understanding of Judaism's call for *ahavat Yisrael* and the safeguarding of the unity of the community of Israel in our relationship to you we are, *be'd'eebad*, willing to forego the demand for full adherence to the requirements for conversion as we accept it for our own conduct. How far can you go in allowing your obligation to preserve unity and commitment to a common destiny to control and modify your requirements for conversion? I disagree with Reform Jews as to what these requirements ought to be. As to Conservative Judaism, I understand from some of its leading spokesmen that the majority of the Conservative rabbis do adhere to the laws of conversion as stated in the *Shulhan Arukh*, though I assume that the Orthodox interpretation as to what constitutes *kabbalat ol mizvot*, the acceptance of the yoke of the Commandments, may differ from theirs. But notwithstanding the disagreements, I do have sufficient respect for the leading rabbinical and scholarly personalities in both the Conservative and Reform groups to know that, in moral responsibility, they could not, and would not, refuse to respond positively to such an approach on the part of those who came to them in the name of halakhah. At least, instead of shouting at each other, we might start talking to each other.

4.

Is this the solution? Perhaps. Is there no other way? Perhaps there is. What concerns us here, however, more than the actual solution to this specific problem is the fact that in all this unseemly shouting it has occurred to no one to define the problem "halakhically" as we have analyzed it. Instead, what should have been resolved in the spiritual dimension has been degraded to a political struggle, one which, to our humiliation, has been silenced for the time being only by the booming of the Syrian guns. Is this Torah? Is this halakhah?

We have discussed this problem of conversion "according to halakhah" because it illustrates the problem of halakah in our time in the widest sense. In the course of the ages a calamity has overtaken the Torah *she'baal peh*, the Oral Torah. In the course of time, what was to be oral teaching became more and more committed to writing. The first "text" of the Oral Torah was the Mishnah. In the Gemarah, which is usually understood to be the explanation of the mishnaic text, one notices the struggle of the Oral Torah, still very much alive, with the mishnaic phase of its solidification. There is a continuous tension between the oral teaching and the written word of what, too, was, in its origin, Torah *she'baal peh*. The text is "corrected;" a law often formulated in the Mishnah as a general principle is interpreted to mean only a single rule

in a specific case. The plain meaning of the text is often changed into its very opposite by an insertion. Interpretation is often "creative," in that it often disregards syntax and literal meaning. The whole of the Gemarah testifies to the unavoidable struggle of the spoken word of the halakhah with its solidification in a text. But, then, the Gemarah, too, was "concluded." And now the Oral Torah has been committed to two texts. However, the second text has much less a solidified form of the oral teaching than the first. There is an essential difference between the spoken and the written word. Whereas the Mishnah was, indeed, a transformation of the spoken word into the written one, the Gemarah was the writing-down of the spoken word in a manner that preserved its essential spoken quality. The Mishnah is a text; the Gemarah is more like notes for a text.

Then came the third phase, that of the codifiers. Maimonides, for instance, in his *Mishneh Torah*, imitating the mishnaic style, transformed the "notes" of the Gemarah into a text and, thus, he transformed the entire extent of Oral Torah into a new kind of Torah *she-biktav*. The ultimate outcome of this process was, of course, the *Shulḥan Arukh*.

Thus, what was not meant to be did come about: the Oral Torah became a written one. In fact, this whole development took place in actual violation of a principle of the Torah, according to which it was forbidden to commit to writing the Oral Torah. (T.B., *Gittin*, 60/b). Why, then, was it done? One might apply to this entire development what was said in the Talmud of Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, who allowed themselves to study the written version of certain parts of the oral tradition. It is said that they did it following a verse in Psalms (119: 126) which, in a famous Talmudic interpretation reads: When it is time to act for God, one may violate His commandment (T.B., *Gittin*, 60/a). They meant to say that, since it was impossible to preserve the entire body of the oral teaching in memory alone, some parts of it had to be put into writing, especially in the light of the vicissitudes, uncertainties, distinction of communities and Talmud academies, and exiles in the history of the Jewish people in many lands. This conclusion is supported by Maimonides' Introduction to his monumental halakhic work, the *Mishneh Torah*.

This means that the transformation of the Oral Torah into a text was due to political history. It was an unavoidable violation of the essence of halakhah when the spoken word was forced into the straitjacket of a written mould. It was no one's fault; nevertheless, it was a spiritual calamity of the first magnitude. Orthodoxy is, in a sense, halakhah in a strait-jacket. Having had to transform the Oral Torah into a new written one, we have become Karaites of this new Torah *she-biktav*, forced upon us by external circumstances.

It was part of the spiritual tragedy of the *Galut* that exactly what

halakhah, in its original vitality and wisdom, intended to protect us from, has happened. In a sense, we have become Karaites. God can no longer rejoice over His “defeat” by His children. It is a condition we have had to accept. It is the price we have paid for the preservation of our identity and Jewish survival.

Today, however, we are faced with unprecedented new challenges and problems, problems of a true halakhic nature, which require solutions in the true halakhic spirit. This is true in the free societies in which Jews live, but it is compellingly manifest in the State of Israel. When some leading rabbinical authorities there maintain that halakhah can solve all of the problems that may be raised for Judaism in a modern state they are right and they are wrong. They are right, for halakhah in its original strength could solve all such problems. Yet, they are wrong. Halakhah, in its present strait-jacketed state, cannot fulfill that function.

This is certainly no plea for reform. We believe that many of our inherited moulds are leaking and cannot meaningfully contain the life that has fallen to the lot of our generation. What is needed, first of all, is to retrace our steps. To return to the original halakhah, to rediscover it, and, having rediscovered it, to restore it to its original function. If only the problem were thoroughly understood, it would liberate us from the stultifying burden of this “Karaite halakhah.” We would then see that in this generation we have been called upon, as it were, by another *bat kol* to accept the responsibility to make use of whatever is still left of the Oral Torah in its textual solidification. It would be the beginning that would lead us back to the original source and strength of halakhah. It would be the beginning of its restoration to its original vitality and dignity, for the sake of which God concluded this covenant of mutuality with Israel. What is needed is not less study of Torah, but better study of Torah. What is needed is at least one Talmud research institute that would be dedicated to this task of rediscovery of halakhah and—at first—its intellectual restoration. What is needed is not less dedication to halakhah, but more faith in halakhah. Where there is greater faith, greater boldness is justified.

As in the past, because it was a time to act for God, shackles had to be placed on the Oral Torah in violation of God’s command, so now the hour has come when the need to act for God places upon us the responsibility to free the Oral Torah from its shackles in obedience to God’s original command. There are risks involved in such an undertaking. Because of it we need, not less, but more *yi’rat shammayim* (fear of God). But, possibly, most of all, we need to join much more *ahavat Yisrael* to our *ahavat ha-torah*, by far more love of all Israel to illuminate our love of Torah. And pray to God for His guidance.

The Ethnic Consciousness of Early Russian Jewish Socialists

ERICH GOLDHAGEN

Every normal human being feels attachment to his own nation. This is a natural and universal social instinct. The Jew, however, is in many respects remote from this norm. His attachment to his nation is vitiated [*krankhaft*], full of contradictions and fractured.¹

UNTIL ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY religion was the dominant expression of Jewish identity. From the very appearance of the Jewish people on the scene of history, religion formed the core of its culture. "Israel and the Torah are one." Almost every aspect of Jewish life—its law, its lore and its customs—was clad in religious symbols. At Sinai, Israel was sanctified and chosen to bear a divine mission on earth to the end of days. It was this belief that lent meaning and purpose to Jewish existence and sustained the Jews throughout the cruel vicissitudes of their history.

The currents of secularism which began to sweep Europe with mounting intensity in the 18th century held grave danger to Jewish existence. With the consolidation of the nation-states, national consciousness tended to eclipse religious identity and the national state became the primary object of man's allegiance, transcending the religious and parochial loyalties which had hitherto held sway over him. The separation of church and state was carried out in most European states, and where religion remained an integral part of the state, as in England, its function was largely symbolic and it scarcely affected the national consciousness which was predominantly secular. The erosion of religion by agnosticism, atheism or Deism, did not threaten the national consciousness; on the contrary, it strengthened it. Even the militancy of International Socialism, seeking to inculcate in the workers a sense of international solidarity, and the belief that they had no fatherland save the community of the international proletariat, did not make an impression profound enough to displace the national sentiment of its adherents, as the fateful hour of decision of September, 1914 proved.

The invasion of secularism, therefore, threatened to sap Jewish group existence at its very foundation. During the first half of the 19th century, in Western Europe, an increasing number of Jews were infected

1. V. Medem, *Zikhroynes un Artiklen* (Warsaw, 1918), p. 127. Medem was the foremost leader of the Bund.

by this spirit of secularism and detached themselves from the ways of their fathers. For reasons of expediency, a large number of them went over to Christianity. The Baptism certificate, as Heine cynically put it, was the entrance ticket into Gentile society, removing the obstacles which Jews had encountered on the road to advancement and careers. Still, many could not bring themselves to embrace Christianity. Some were inhibited by intellectual integrity; others feared the contempt and hatred that the Jewish community, with which they had retained ties, would visit upon them, for in Jewish Orthodoxy apostasy was a cardinal sin—a sin graver than homicide. These Jews, suspended between the Jewish people of which they were no longer an integral part and the Gentile world which refused them full and equal membership, came to be known as the marginal, or the “non-Jewish Jews.”² Having inwardly broken with Judaism, they resented their Jewishness as a painful and futile burden, a stigma drawing the abuse and malice of the Gentiles. It had no positive meaning for them. The armor of faith—the profound conviction that the Jews are God’s chosen people—protected the Orthodox Jew against the shafts of anti-Semitism which could inflict on him physical, but not psychic suffering. His inward balance remained unshaken. Suffering and even death at the hands of the Gentiles were meaningful to the Orthodox; they were manifestations of the inscrutable will of God guiding the destinies of His people even in suffering and death and they were endured with fortitude. But, on the “non-Jewish Jew,” anti-Semitism inflicted deep psychic wounds. He suffered for something that he would cheerfully forget but which the Gentile world refused to forget, and of which it reminded him with malicious glee.³ The more thoroughly acculturated the marginal Jew was, and the more intense his frustrated cravings to merge with the dominant culture, the more strongly he resented his ill-starred origin and the more acute his *Judenschmerz*.⁴ The question of Misha Gordon, the Jewish hero of Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*, is the perennial question of this type of Jew and is probably uppermost in the minds of many Soviet Jews who, today, fall into this class.

For as long as he could remember he had never ceased to wonder why, having arms and legs like everyone else, and a language and way of life common to all, one could be different from the others, liked only by few and, moreover, loved by no one. He could not understand a sit-

2. See Stonequist, *The Marginal Man* (New York, 1937). Ruppin estimated that of the 12,000,000 Jews living at the turn of this century one million fell into this category. (A. Ruppin, *A Die Juden der Gegenwart* [1911], pp. 13–15.)

3. Heine said of Spinoza that “his co-religionists declared him unworthy of the name Jew, but his Christian enemies were generous to leave him that name.” C. A. Buchheim, *Heine Prosa* (Oxford, 1899), pp. xxviii.

4. Zionists distinguished between *Judennot*, the physical and material plight of the East European Jew, and *Judenschmerz*, the emotional insecurity and anxiety of the materially prosperous but assimilated West-European Jew.

uation in which if you were worse than other people you could not make an effort to improve yourself. What did it mean to be a Jew? What was the purpose of it? What was the reward or the justification of this impotent challenge, which brought nothing but grief?⁵

In the seventh decade of the Bolshevik regime this question gnaws with burning acuteness in the minds of a great number of Soviet Jews, whose marginal condition is of unprecedented dimensions. But to understand the contemporary plight of these Soviet Jews we must go back to its roots, to the encounter between Socialism and the Jews in Eastern Europe during the last quarter of the 19th century.

* * * *

By the middle of the 19th century a small but increasing number of Jews began to emancipate themselves from Orthodoxy and to seek admission into the Gentile world from which they had hitherto been segregated. These Jews, many of whom were concentrated in the cosmopolitan city of Odessa, eagerly adopted the "wonderful Russian language"⁶ and strove to acquire "the Russian national spirit and the Russian forms of life."⁷ Only a minority converted to Christianity. The majority, taking their cue from the evolution of the Jews in Western Europe, saw no incompatibility between Russification (*Obrussenie*) and adherence to a reformed Judaism shorn of those externals which revolted the eye and jarred the ear of a "cultured" person. They wanted to be simultaneously loyal sons of the Russian fatherland and believing Jews. They believed that only by assimilating could the Jews hope to be granted civic equality. As long as the Jews obstinately persisted in their old "obscurantist" ways and resisted the spread of culture, the Czarist government was justified in refusing them the rights of full citizenship. The attitude of these "enlighteners" towards the autocracy was docile and marked by infinite and abject reverence. The Czarist government, most of them argued, could not be reproached for its treatment of the Jews. How could it admit to full citizenship a people stubbornly insisting on living "in darkness" and viewing with horror any attempt to expose it to the light of culture? Before the Jews of Russia could even plead for emancipation they would have to prove themselves worthy of it. They would have to cast off their kaftan, abandon their horrible jargon, that "jarring, corrupt and poor" tongue "unsuited for the expression of a single high thought,"⁸ rid themselves of "stupid habits," develop a sense of patriotism and loyalty, pursue secular knowledge and productive occupations and, in general, prove their useful-

5. B. Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (New York, 1958), p. 13.

6. O. Rabinovich in *Razsvet* (1860, # 30).

7. I. Orshanki, *Yevrei v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1877), p. 177.

8. A. G. in *Razsvet*, quoted in Tsinberg, *Istoriya Yevreiskoi Pechati v. Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1915), p. 51.

ness. Only after having fulfilled these conditions could the Jews hope that the government would be "magnanimous towards us and recognize us as its children."⁹

The *maskilim*, as the Enlighteners were called in Hebrew, for all their hostility to the traditional Jewish mode of life, did not repudiate Judaism *tout court*. They wanted to cleanse it of what they thought ugly and incompatible with Reason and with the spirit of modern times. Judaism was to be transformed from a mode of life embracing the whole of the existence of the individual and, setting him apart from the environment as an outlandish and strange being, into a religion with a minimum of ritual, inconspicuously confined to home and synagogue, and the Jew to be changed from an alien denizen of Russia without any sense of patriotism into an obedient Czar-loving subject speaking and feeling like a Russian. This ideal was summed up by the motto: "Be a Jew at home and a human being outside of the home." They were divided on how much of Judaism should be discarded, but all of them envisaged some kind of Jewish identity to be distilled from the process of purifying archaic Orthodoxy. Some wanted to be Russians in everything but their "Mosaic" faith. But even the most extreme of the *maskilim* retained feelings of kinship and solidarity with Jewry, and their concern with the fate of their "unfortunate brethren" testified to their abiding attachment.

Such feelings were absent, however, from those young Jews who joined the ranks of the revolutionary movements in the 70's and 80's. Under the quasi-liberal reign of Alexander II, Jews were, for the first time, admitted in relatively large numbers to the institutions of higher learning. In the universities, their number rose from about 160 in 1865 to 1,684 in seven universities alone in 1886. In gymnasias, Jewish students increased from 48 in 1840 to 2,362 by 1872.¹⁰ It was from amongst this group and from the large number of students who, barred from the universities, studied informally at home, that the first Jews were recruited into the revolutionary camp. Their proportion, though negligible in the 70's, grew steadily. It is impossible to ascertain their numerical weight, but a measure of their proportion is perhaps provided by the percentage of Jews among those who stood trial for subversive activities. Between 1884 and 1890 the Jews formed 13.4% of them, while between 1901 and 1903, the high water mark of the Bund, they were 29%.¹¹

9. Quoted from *Hameliz* in Tsinberg, *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

10. E. Tsherikover, *Historische Shriften* (Paris, 1939), Vol. 3, p. 64.

11. Quoted from *Juedisches Echo* #22, 1917, in Arthur Cohen, "*Die Judenfrage ein Soziologisches Problem*," *Jahrbuch fuer Gesetzgebung des Deutschen Reiches*, Vol. 42, p. 147.

In 1903, Witte told Herzl that "over half of all the revolutionaries were Jews." Czarist officials tended to exaggerate the role of the Jews in the revolutionary movement. To maintain that the radical opposition to the regime had no deep native

The Jewish intellectual was particularly susceptible to revolutionary appeals. As an intellectual he suffered from the frustrations and resentments that impelled the Russian intelligentsia to revolt against Czarism, and as a Jew he felt keenly the oppressive fetters for which the Russian Jews had been singled out. The Pale of Settlement, the *numerus clausus* in the universities, and the constricting legal disabilities were ever-present and painful reminders of the oppressive nature of the regime; and few Jews could escape these prohibitions and calculated indignities. Yet almost all Jewish radicals who plunged themselves into the revolutionary camp severed their ties with the Jewish community and cast on it glances of contemptuous indifference rarely tempered by pity. As radicals, they were avowed atheists repudiating all religions, and since all things Jewish seemed, by definition, religious, they abjured any link with their ancestry. "Let us renounce the old world, let us dust off the dust of our feet"¹² was the slogan with which they turned their backs on the Jewish people.

In the eyes of the radicals, Judaism was not only a repulsive religion; it was also a form of social parasitism. The Narodnik movement, the dominant revolutionary movement in the 70's, glorified the peasant as the repository of virtue and the potential architect of the Good Society. But the great majority of the Jews were traders and middle-men, occupations which socialists regarded as parasitic, and there were few Jewish peasants. The idea that only labor was "productive" and dignified and that whoever did not live by the sweat of his brow lived parasitically off his fellow man was part of the Christian tradition transmitted to secular socialism by the physiocrats. In this view, "all Jews were exploiters sucking the blood of the peasants."¹³ If the peasant was "a revolutionary by instinct and a socialist by nature," the Jew was "a religio-obscurantist by instinct and a parasitic exploiter by nature." "I am myself a Jew," reads a letter by an anonymous Jewish student, "but I have seen few Jewish workers. Russian Jews are only interested in petty earnings and they are ready to sell everything including their honor. It is not worth wasting effort on them."¹⁴

This attitude, born of the logic of the beliefs of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, was intertwined and reinforced by the repul-

roots but consisted, predominantly, of alien elements and despicable Jews at that, was as propagandistically useful as it was psychologically comfortable. It was useful in that it served to discredit the revolutionaries in the eyes of "patriotic people," especially peasants, and it nourished the warm illusion that all would be well were it not for a handful of Jewish nihilists bent on destroying Old Mother Russia. The powers that be could thus blind themselves to the real political and social causes for the revolutionary ferment.

12. Kh. Zhitlovsky, *Zikhroynes fun Mayn Lebn* (New York, 1940), Vol. II, p. 45.

13. Yahallal, *Zikaron Basefer* (Zitomir, 1910), p. 34.

14. B. Frumkin, "Iz Istorii Revolyutsionnogo Dvizhenia Sredi Yevreev v 70ikh Godov," *Yevreiskaya Starina*, 1911, p. 225.

siveness, in their eyes, of the physical appearance of the Jew who was steeped in religion from head to toe. His outlandish garb, his beard and earlocks, his animated gesticulations were as amusing as they were abhorrent. His stooped back, every ready meekly to submit to the knout, his suspicious and sad eyes gleaming with fear, his sluggish walk, his awkwardness, his apparently cowardly demeanor, all characteristics imprinted by centuries of persecutions, made the Jew, in the eyes of radicals, a contemptible figure. These qualities and characteristics were the opposite of what the radicals admired in man. Logic and emotion, in the minds of the revolutionary intelligentsia, fused into a powerful aversion to the Jews.

The fact that the Jews were among the worst victims of the regime which the revolutionaries denounced for its oppression, and which they were sworn to overthrow, evoked little sympathy in them. Nor were they moved by the poverty and misery in which the mass of the Jewish "parasites" lived; the "exploiting" Jewish traders were not richer than the peasants whom they were allegedly exploiting. The bludgeon of Czarism might fall with pitiless cruelty on the Jews, but this did not excite the concern of those—Jews and non-Jews alike—who were dedicated to the liberation of "the people." The influential organ of the intelligentsia, *Notes of the Fatherland*, curtly dismissed complaints about their indifference to the plight of the Jews:

The general answer which Russian journalists can give to the reproaches of the Jews that they are indifferent to their fate is as simple as it is just. The multimillion Russian peasantry has incomparably more rights to their attention than all of the Jews of the world combined.¹⁵

And, many years later, some of the Jewish radicals who had in the meantime penitently returned to their people, searchingly recalled their alienation. "To all of us," recollected Zundeleovich, a distinguished member of the *Narodnaya Volya*, and its "minister for external affairs," "Jewry as a national organism did not constitute a phenomenon worthy of support. The main element binding the Jews into an entity was religion, which we regarded as unconditionally retrogressive."¹⁶ Morris Vinchevski, who was to become a celebrated Yiddish socialist poet, confessed that he had felt closer to the muzhik than to the Jews. "We were all Narodniki, the muzhiks were our brethren."¹⁷ Another repentant radical reminisced:

We were all convinced assimilationists . . . this could be explained by our estrangement from the spiritual culture of Russian Jewry and our negative attitude to its orthodox and bourgeois leaders from whose midst we ourselves sprang. We must confess that Russian literature also im-

15. Tsinberg, *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

16. B. Frumkin, *Op. cit.*, p. 321.

17. Morris Vinchevski, *Di Tsukunft*, 1906, XI, p. 38.

planted in us a conception of the Jews not as a people but as a parasitic class.¹⁸

The renunciation of Jewishness by the radical intelligentsia was usually coupled with a strong affirmation of cosmopolitanism. The belief that the existence of various nationalities is unnatural and a source of evil and that, in the future society, all nations would merge into a vast and harmonious brotherhood of Men was an article of faith of most socialist ideologies, including Russian Populism. While to most socialists this was *Zukunftsmusik* of the radiant future which had little relevance to the tasks of the present (even if they wanted to, they would not have known how to go about dissolving nations into *humanitas*), to the Jewish socialists the dissolution of Jewry was a process which was well advanced in Western Europe and in whose beginnings in Russia they themselves participated. Russian or German socialists might pay lip service to cosmopolitanism as an ideal, but it did not occur to them to work towards the dissolution of the Russian or German peoples; at most, for these socialists, it meant elevating themselves above parochial patriotism, to serve and owe loyalty to the working classes of all nations whose interests they believed to be identical with the interests of the whole of humanity. For the Jewish socialist, however, cosmopolitanism was not only a fervent hope, but a goal seemingly within his reach; he fled from Judaism under the colors of cosmopolitanism. This phenomenon was not confined to Jewish socialists alone. Throughout Europe the "non-Jewish Jews" were the most prominent bearers of cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism may be said to be the patriotism of the nation-less. Those who have been torn from their ethnic roots, restlessly shifting in a world of national passions and loyalties, develop an Olympian detachment from the heights of which they view the melancholy spectacle of the warring Babel of nations. Having no national loyalties, they would like to see the very principle of nationality abolished and the world converted into a cosmopolis inhabited by Men, not by Jews, Russians, or Germans. They proclaim with Dante: "The World is my Home."¹⁹ To the non-Jewish Jew the prospect of such a world spelled the end of the accursed label of Jewishness that stuck to him with inefaceable tenacity. Rootlessness is often the obverse side of cosmopolitanism, as the high priests of *Agitprop* never ceased to proclaim during the dark years of the *Zhdanovshchina*. Ilya Ehrenburg, in a rare article written for a Yiddish journal, characterized Jewish cosmopolitanism thus:

Jews have matured truly to experience universal culture. This is neither the cosmopolitanism of snobs, nor the internationalism of politicians. This

18. Vl. Yokhelson, "*Dalekoe Proshloe*," *Byloe*, #13, 1918, p. 56.

19. Quoted in J. Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Cologne, n.d.), p. 100.

is an enlargement of the emotional structure of the individual, a lack of interest in what is private, local, or nationally limited.²⁰

Even A. Lieberman, the most "nationalistic" of the early Jewish socialists, who not only proudly affirmed his Jewishness but set out to spread socialism among Jews, wrote about himself in a letter to the Russian socialist Smirnov:

You should know that Daniel (Lieberman's pseudonym) is a zhid and as a zhid he is a cosmopolitan; he cannot attach himself to any country by a special patriotism . . . he can only be a cosmo-socialist (if one could use this expression) but he is not at all a zhid nationalist; he is international, and his strongest wish is that the division of the human race into nations and the fragmentation of the globe into territories (sic) be abolished. For such a socialism he is prepared to sacrifice his life, but only for such a socialism.²¹

"I am not a Jew but an internationalist,"²² Trotsky told a Jewish delegation. And, on another occasion, when challenged by Medem, the Bundist leader, who said: "When it comes to classifying yourself you certainly cannot ignore the fact of national allegiance. You consider yourself, I take it, to be either a Russian or a Jew." Trotsky cried, "No! you are mistaken! I am a social democrat and that's all."²³

It would be misleading to suggest that all Jewish radicals were equally alienated or hostile. In some, radical beliefs were at loggerheads with irrepressible affections for their suffering people. But even those who publicly identified themselves with the Jews had to undergo an inner struggle to overcome ideological inhibitions, and their championing of the cause of the Jews was undertaken apologetically. Theirs was the attitude of the emancipated son whose experience and training had carried him far away from the parental home, steeped in old fashioned ways and engaged in unsavory practices, into the modern world, transforming his outlook and estranging him from his parents. He was ashamed and resentful of them, but he could not escape gnawing feelings of responsibility and sentiments of filial piety and affection ingrained by childhood memories of the love and solicitude lavished by his parents. Their poverty and distress aroused his concern and pity, and the humiliation and suffering to which they were subjected by neighbors and strangers wounded him to the quick; he was even more sensitive to these humiliations than his parents, whom faith and tradition had rendered immune. He was willing and ready to help them. At the same time, the fresh values he had absorbed made him concur in the severe

20. Ilya Ehrenburg, "*Yiden un Zeyer Batsiung Tsur Eygener un Fremder Literatur*," *Bikher Velt* (Warsaw, 1928), Vol. I, p. 36.

21. Quoted in B. Sapir, "*Lieberman et le Socialisme Russe*," *International Review for Social History*, Vol. 3, 1938, p. 37.

22. G. Ziv, *Kharakteriska* (New York, 1921), p. 46.

23. Quoted in Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution* (New York, 1957), p. 169.

judgments passed on his parents. But unlike the detractors who condemned only to wish ill and to injure, he chastised his parents lovingly, seeking to reform them.

Among the handful of radicals who did not set their faces against the Jewish people, Aron Lieberman stands out.

As a student of the Vilna rabbinical seminary established by the government for the training of Russian-speaking, modernized rabbis, but which became a breeding ground of political radicalism, Lieberman was infected by revolutionary ideas and later joined a secret study circle. When, in 1875, the circle was discovered by the police, he fled to escape arrest. In London, he befriended Lavrov, the guiding star of Russian intellectuals, and worked for his journal, *Vpered*, in the dual capacity of typesetter and occasional contributor. There, he also seems to have acquainted himself with the ideas of an obscure German-Jewish exile, Karl Marx—for his views, in contrast to those of most Russian radicals who were still under the sway of Narodnik ideologies, betrayed pronounced, though not explicit, Marxian influences. In London, he laid plans to carry the message of socialism to the Jews; and these endeavors raised smiles in the colony of exiles who treated Lieberman's concern for the Jews as his idiosyncrasy. Any attempt to convert the Jewish masses to socialism, for which they were believed to be singularly unfit, seemed futile and preposterous. In 1875, Lieberman issued, in Hebrew, an appeal to the Jewish youth—perhaps the first socialist appeal to Jews, and the first time that the language of the Bible was used for the propagation of secular socialist ideas. In the following year, he formed the first Jewish socialist society, The Hebrew Socialist Union, which was soon rent by dissension and collapsed after a precarious existence of six months. In 1877, he moved to Vienna, where he published a Hebrew socialist journal, *Haemet*, intended for distribution in Russia. After the third issue the journal expired. Suspected of being a nihilist, Lieberman spent almost one year in Prussian and Austrian prisons, and on his release travelled to the United States via London. Having been rejected by a woman he loved, he committed suicide in Syracuse, New York, in 1880.

Lieberman was not an original thinker, but he possessed the gift of clear and effective exposition of current ideas. At a time when Hebrew had not yet been developed into an adequate medium for the expression of modern thought, his style was remarkably fresh and vigorous. Nor does his importance lie in any enduring achievement; all his enterprises ended in failure, leaving few lasting traces behind them. His writings hardly produced a ripple and he was soon forgotten, only to be rediscovered twenty years later by historians and party ideologues, when he became the object of interest and scrutiny. Both Jewish socialist currents—the Bund and the Zionist socialists of all shades—claimed him as

their precursor, and his memory was harnessed to party chariots. He was hailed as the first Jewish socialist who did not flee from his people but who tried to bridge the chasm that was presumed to exist between Jews and socialism. Bolshevik Jewish historiography which, in keeping with Pokrovsky's dictum, projected politics into the past, held him up as the archetype of the Jewish nationalistic heresy within socialism. Bolshevik Jewish historians denounced him for having been the first one to infuse into the pure and fresh waters of "socialist internationalism" the poisonous admixture of Jewish nationalism.

Lieberman's importance lies in the fact that he was the first Jewish radical to break through the wall of indifference and aversion separating the radicals from the Jewish people. Moved primarily by emotional attachment, his declared attitudes towards the Jews reveal contradictions and inconsistencies which would become aggravated into serious tensions in the Jewish socialist movements of non-Zionist persuasion when they attempted to come to grips with the Jewish problem. He is thus, indeed, the archetype, embodying in embryo the problems which would bedevil the Bund and its partial heir, the Jewish *apparat* within Bolshevism: the problem of redefining Jewish identity and filling it with fresh content after it had been emptied of religion—hitherto its life-blood. In concrete terms, all non-Zionist socialists dedicated to the building of Jewish life in the Diaspora had to answer the following questions: What are the Jews? Are they, or are they not, a nation? And if they are, lacking a common territory, the almost universal attribute of nations, what is the substance of their nationhood? The non-Zionist socialists would be confronted by the contradiction between their affirmation of Jewish nationhood and their inhibition, dictated by ideological commitments, to counteract the powerful forces of assimilation corroding Jewish existence. They would have to wrestle with the question whether, under the socialist dispensation, a niche could be found for the Jewish people as a distinct ethnic group, or whether the "liberation of humanity" would spell the liberation of the Jews from their own ethnic selves.

Lieberman, himself, expressed his views freely and naturally, apparently unaware that they were logically inconsistent. But when, in its party program, the Bund sought to embody its attempt at reconciliation of Jewish ethnicism with Marxian doctrine, the problems inherent in such an attempt led to serious embarrassment, both in matters of theory and in matters of practice. It was in the Jewish sections of the Communist party that this legacy of the Bund assumed particularly acute and tragic forms, and many Bolsheviks lost their lives in the course of grappling with it.

Lieberman took great pride in his Jewish origin. In London, he committed a serious breach of socialist solidarity when he refused to

attend a Polish meeting on the ground that "I am a Jew and the Poles don't like Jews,"²⁴ and this at a time when the Polish struggle for independence commanded the sympathy and admiration of radical forces throughout Europe. He argued against holding a meeting of the Hebrew Socialist Union on the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Ab, a traditional day of mourning to commemorate the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, "because as long as socialism has not come into being, political independence is of great importance, and the 9th of Ab is the day on which the Jews lost their independence. Therefore, it has, for us Jewish socialists, no less significance than for other Jews."²⁵ This scandalized all right-thinking socialists who regarded the commemoration of the 9th day of Ab a concession to religion. He invoked the martyrdom of the Jews in the cause of their religion as an example to be emulated by the Jewish revolutionaries. "If our forefathers obstinately endured all the tribulations of the Inquisition and perished on the stake for their faith, will banishment daunt us who strive for still higher goals?"²⁶ At his trial in Vienna Lieberman declared that he was a "Jew by nationality without any religion." He was scarcely aware that he was expressing, perhaps for the first time in an articulate form, the revolutionary formula separating the Jewish "nationality from religion," two elements which had been regarded as inseparable. To be at once an atheist and an affirming Jew, to be, in other words, a secular Jewish nationalist, would have seemed to most of Lieberman's contemporaries an impossibility. To split the organic unity of Jewish religion and Jewish ethnicism was an operation similar to that of splitting a human organism into two and preserving the breath of life in one of the halves.

These professions of adherence to a Jewish collectivity dwelt side by side with contradictory ideas. On the very same page on which Lieberman invokes the martyrdom of the Jews, he writes "the Russian muzhik is our brother. We socialists know neither national nor racial distinctions. All of us who live in Russia are Russians."²⁷ And in the first issue of the Hebrew journal, *Haemet*, he counsels his readers to hasten the arrival of the moment when "we will be able to say that we Jews have no separate culture distinguishing us from the cultures of other peoples."²⁸

Lieberman considered himself a Jew without religion and at the same time also a Russian. He wrote Hebrew with loving care and was not even averse to commemorating a religious day of mourning while preaching the self-dissolution of Jewry. Here are reflected the conflict-

24. Sapir, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

25. I. Tsinberg, in *Perezhito* (St. Petersburg, 1908), Vol. 1, pp. 240-241.

26. "Iz Vilno," *Vpered* (London, 1875), # 16, p. 505.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 505.

28. Quoted from *Haemet*, # 1 in Tsinberg, *Op. cit.*, p. 243.

ing pressures and attractions to which the Jew who embraced socialism was exposed. As long as he dwelt in the shell of religion encasing the Jewish people he possessed a firm and articulate framework of identity. But once he emerged from this shell into the climate of secularism and socialism the need arose to replace the broken framework. Many evaded the question and considered themselves free-floating cosmopolitans. Some, like Lieberman, experienced an inner gravitation towards things Jewish, while others were driven to identify themselves with the Jews by external pressure; and both tried to reconcile their Jewish identity with the claims of the socialist creed. The result was incoherence, an incoherence more pronounced in words, in theoretical formulae, than in sentiments. For as we shall see later, secularism, socialism, and the affirmation of Jewishness were gradually blended into a harmonious whole—even though, in the long run, probably an unstable whole. But the doctrinal garb tailored to suit this inner harmony was a clumsy patchwork. Gentile socialists and Jewish socialist assimilationists to whom anything Jewish smacked of reaction suspected that the socialist garb of the Bund and of other Jewish socialist parties was but a disguise to hide their reactionary nudities. And neither the Bund nor the Jewish Bolsheviks ever succeeded in commanding the full approbation and respect of their Russian comrades for their ideological attire.

* * * *

In the history of Russian Jewry, the pogroms of 1881 were an important landmark. In the spring and summer of that year a wave of violence swept through the southern part of the Pale of Settlement. Guided by an invisible hand, with the connivance—if not blessing—of the government, mobs of peasants threw themselves on the defenseless Jewish population, looting, destroying, beating and raping. The authorities stood idly by while the fury of the mob reigned unchecked. Only after two or three days did troops and police intervene to put an end to the “disturbances,” as the pogroms were euphemistically called. Over one hundred Jewish communities were visited by these orgies of destruction, claiming, apart from enormous material damage, scores of dead and hundreds of wounded. Terror and anguish gripped the Jewish masses. Every Jewish community in the domain of the Czar lived in the shadow of fear, awaiting the blow.

To many of the Jewish intellectuals these pogroms dealt a severe emotional shock. The enlighteners had zealously wooed Mother Russia and professed their love and loyalty to her, striving to be “recognized by her as her children.” But, instead of a friendly hand, Russia showed them a mailed fist. The radicals had been indifferent to the plight of the Jewish people, to their humiliation and misery, and they had been hostile to their religion and mode of life; but they could not remain in-

different to this brutal assault on the very life and limb of their people. Moreover, in the pogroms they shared the fate of their brethren; the mob did not distinguish between enlightened and unenlightened Jews. Half-repressed feelings of kinship flared up. In February of 1882, on the day dedicated by the Jews to fasting and praying for relief from their current distress, Jewish "students," as the members of the intelligentsia were popularly called, appeared in the synagogues, those very synagogues which they had hitherto shunned as hotbeds of obscurantism and reaction, to demonstrate their solidarity, not so much with the religion to which few became intellectual converts, as with their people. In Kiev, one "student" addressed the assembled worshippers:

We are your brethren. We are Jews like you. We regret that we have hitherto considered ourselves as Russians. Events of the last years . . . have shown us how sadly mistaken we have been. Yes, we are Jews.²⁹

Many gave up hope that Jews could ever find peace and dignity in Russia and turned to other lands for a haven. Some looked to the New World beyond the Atlantic, for long the refuge for all those who fled the oppressions of the Old World. Others sought a more radical solution. They did not want to exchange one land of exile for another, however alluring its promises of freedom and opportunity. They wanted to put an end to exile, to restore a Jewish homeland where Jews would not be at the mercy of strangers, but masters of their own fate. It was natural that these sentiments become focused on Palestine, the ancient Jewish Homeland, the memory of which had been vividly preserved and embellished in the Jewish mind throughout the centuries and for the restoration of which Jews had never ceased to pray and hope. Under the blow of the pogroms the broad vision of the salvation of humanity receded, to give way to the narrower, but no less passionate, vision of the salvation of Jewry. It was not voluntarily that many of the Jewish intelligentsia turned their backs on the Temple of cosmopolitanism to worship at the tribal shrines. They were driven to it. Morris Vinchevski, who was among those Jewish radicals whose faith in socialism survived the impact of the pogroms, described this transformation in a passage whose distinctive flavor, compounded of idiomatic Yiddish and Biblical imagery, can be conveyed only inadequately in translation:

A short while ago the Jews, especially the young ones, were socialists . . . Every young Jewish man who had a pure heart and a little education was filled with hope that the world was about to be regenerated . . .

Suddenly the pogroms came. The Jew felt in straits. The road to this new socialist world seemed ten times as long, and here in this country one is surrounded by ferocious beasts.

History repeats itself. What happened three thousand years ago . . . repeated itself in Russia. The people began to clamor: "Where is the socialist Moses?"

29. Abe Cahan, *Bleter Fun Mayn Lebn* (New York 1926), Vol. I, p. 500.

"Quiet, children, he will come soon . . .

"Oy Vay! He tarries," they shouted, "and we wither here in this country."

"Do you know what?" somebody named Aaron exclaimed, "give me your gold and silver and let your wives remove their jewelry. I would throw it in somewhere and we will have a new God, a new idea, a new hope."

This was done and from the furnace of fantasy emerged a golden calf which one called *Yishuv Erets Israel*. And the impatient Jews who had grown tired waiting for the true Messiah, exclaimed in unison, "This is our God, oh Israel."

This, in short, is the history of Russo-Jewish Palestinism. . . . He who drowns clings even to a straw and thus the Russian Jews clung to Palestine.³⁰

Palestinophilia, as the Zionist movement, which was still in its infancy, was then called, received a fresh crop of recruits from those who, in disillusion, abandoned the camps of socialism and Russification. No other development gave such a powerful impetus to the growth of secular Jewish nationalism as the pogroms of 1881.

The attitude of the leaders of the revolutionary movement toward the pogroms sharpened the pangs of disappointment of the Jewish radicals. On August 30, 1881, a proclamation issued in Ukrainian over the signature of the Executive Committee of the Narodnaya Volya blessed the riots against the Jews and exhorted the peasants to further violence against "the parasitic Jews" and the "Czar of the Jews." "The people of the Ukraine suffers more than any one else from the Jews . . . you have already begun to rise against the Jews . . . you have done well."³¹

This proclamation cannot be simply explained away as the anti-Semitic spirit of the radical intelligentsia. No doubt the authors of the proclamation bore no love for the Jews. But the appeal to the peasants was more than an outburst of anti-Semitism; it was a calculated device. It is doubtful whether the Narodnaya Volya really believed that the Czar was the "Czar of the Jews;" no literate person could have been unaware of the public disdain of the Czar for the Jews, although the charge of parasitism was probably sincere. Underlying this appeal, apart from the Bakuninist conviction that "the passion for destruction is a constructive passion" was a Machiavellian calculation, the wish and the hope that the violence against the Jews would be extended to the autocracy. By linking the Jews with the Czar they sought to telescope the anti-Jewish riots with the social revolution, to fan the fire of

30. Quoted by Morris Vinchevski in *Dos Naye Leben*, # 12, December 1910, pp. 30-31, from his article in *Der Arbayer Fraynd* without indicating the exact date. He only says that it was printed in Nos. 2 & 3 of the second volume. The journal was not available to me.

31. Quoted in E. Tsherikover, *Geshikhte fun der Yidisher Arbeter Bavegung in di Fareynikte Shtaten* (New York, 1945), Vol. II, p. 174.

the pogroms into a conflagration engulfing the authorities. They were consciously lying, but, to their minds, this was a "noble lie," ennobled by the lofty purpose it served. Also, they could assuage their conscience by persuading themselves that the Jews were, after all, not altogether innocent: were they not parasitic traders exploiting the peasants? But even if the blood of the Jews shed in the pogroms was wholly innocent, to the drafters of the proclamation its shedding seemed morally purposeful; it was "the lubricant on the wheels of revolution."

In the society of radical emigrés in Geneva, one by the name of Zhukovsky defended his approval of the pogroms in the following terms:

60% of the Jewish population are engaged in commerce. This is the background against which the peasant hunts down the Jew. . . . To be sure, from a humanitarian standpoint, it is a piece of barbarism when peasants fall like savages upon a frightened little Jew and beat him until he bleeds. Take, however, this event in the context of social dynamics. Why does he beat? Because this is, in the meantime, his political ballot. He has no other way of venting his wrath against his exploitation by the government. It is, indeed, a pity that the peasant beats the Jew—the most innocent of his exploiters. But he beats, and this is the beginning of his struggle for liberation. When . . . his fists will have grown strong and hard he will strike those who are above the Jews.³²

In this conception, the pogroms were the dress rehearsal for the coming revolution.

But even those radicals who did not view the pogroms with approval as heralding the coming struggle for freedom could not bring themselves to call on the peasants to stop the violence against the Jews. Anti-Semitism was endemic in the Russian peasantry. It was its daily psychic bread, designed to still the grievances and frustrations born of hunger—hunger for land and hunger for food. The Russian intelligentsia which, for two decades, had tried with only limited success to strike roots in the Russian peasantry, to secure its confidence and to persuade it to follow the intellectuals as the champions of its aspirations, feared that if they showed concern for the Jews they would alienate the peasants. To come out in defense of the Jews would have branded them as Jewish stooges. Was it worth endangering the cause of socialism for the sake of the Jews? These were the arguments (or should one, rather, say rationalizations or excuses) with which those radicals who had dissociated themselves from the active exhorters to violence justified their refusal to come out publicly against the pogroms. Lavrov, who was to describe anti-Semitism as the "most tragic epidemic of our era,"³³ declined to print a pamphlet against the pogroms submitted to him by Akselrod.

32. F. Kurski, "*Di Zhenever Grupe Sotsialistn Yidn Un Ir Oyfruf*" (1880), *Historishe Shriften* (Vilno-Paris, 1939), Vol. III, p. 561.

33. *Materially Dlya Istorii Russkogo Sotsial Revolyutsionnogo Dvizhenie* (Geneva), # 4, May 1894, p. 254.

I must confess that I regard this question as a very complicated one, indeed, an exceedingly difficult one for a party which seeks to come closer to the people. Theoretically, on paper, the question can be easily answered. But, in view of the prevailing popular passions and the need of the Russian socialists to have the people on their side whenever possible, the question is quite different.³⁴

The succeeding generation of Russian revolutionaries did not share the belief expressed by the Narodnaya Volya in 1881 that anti-Semitic outrages have a redemptive quality. Manifestations of anti-Semitism were not tolerated in the Marxist-Socialist movement which dominated the Russian revolutionary scene during the next two decades. Plekhanov, the "father of Russian Marxism," in his pamphlet, *Our Differences*, published in 1884, in which he settled accounts with the Narodnaya Volya, condemned the proclamation of 1881 as "a base flattery of the national prejudices of the Russian people."³⁵ And Lenin, in 1903, after the Kishinev pogrom, recalled with shame the "infamous proclamation" and called on all socialists to defend the Jews against the mob as a matter of honor.³⁶

By the turn of the century, both in Eastern and in Western Europe, socialists tended to view anti-Semitism in a new light. Hitherto, they had regarded it as a misguided protest against existing social conditions by petty bourgeois and proletarians who, failing to understand that the capitalistic system of production was the cause of their plight, eagerly embraced the myth that "the Jews are our misfortune." Anti-Semitism was, therefore, looked upon by socialists with critical benevolence as a deluded anti-capitalist movement—"the socialism of fools," in the words of August Bebel. It was hoped that, sooner or later, those ensnared by it would recognize that not only "circumcised capital" was the cause of their misery but "circumcised and uncircumcised" capital alike;³⁷ and this recognition would bring them into the fold of socialism. In this view, anti-Semitism was a primitive and preparatory stage of social re-

34. P. G. Akselroda, *Iz Arkhiva*, (Berlin, 1924), Vol. II, p. 30.

West European socialists, some of whom were not free from anti-Jewish prejudices, were also reluctant to adopt a firm stand against anti-Semitism. When, at the socialist congress in Brussels, in 1891, Abe Cahan, representing the United Trade Unions of the United States, introduced a resolution condemning anti-Semitism, he was reproached by Paul Singer and Victor Adler, both of Jewish origin, (the last a convert to Christianity), for "tactlessness" and for playing into the hands of the enemies of socialism. The socialists, they argued, would now be charged with taking the Jews under their protective wings. Cahn remained unmoved, and his resolution was defeated. In its stead the Congress passed a resolution condemning both "anti-Semitic and philo-Semitic agitation." (*Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des Internationalen Arbeiter-Kongress Zu Brussel 16-22 August 1891*, [Berlin: Verlag Vorwaerts, 1893], pp. 15-16).

35. G. V. Plekhanov, *Izbrannyye Filosofskie Proizvedeniya* (Moscow, 1956), Vol. I, p. 217.

36. *Iskra*, 1903.

37. This metaphor appeared in *Vorwaerts* # 199 Berlin, August 27, 1891.

bellion springing from basically sound sources. But when it seemed that instead of being a vestibule of socialism it had become a useful tool in the hands of the ruling class to befog the minds of the proletariat and divert them from their real enemies, the socialist attitude changed. Anti-Semitism came to be treated unequivocally as a hostile ideology.

During the two decades before 1917 there were few recorded overt expressions of anti-Jewish bias in the Russian socialist movement, although the campaign against Jewish nationalism, as conducted by Russian social democracy, sometimes appeared to have anti-Semitic overtones. Some of these overtones were genuine; others, however, were imaginary reflections of sensitive Jewish minds. But, since, in the eyes of Russian Social Democrats and, especially, in those of Lenin, any organized endeavor to foster and perpetuate Jewish identity was tainted with nationalism, it was easy for sensitive Jewish minds to mistake attacks on Jewish nationalism for anti-Semitism. It is, however, doubtful whether any of the leaders of the Russian socialist parties harboured anti-Semitic sentiments. Such sentiments were certainly absent from Lenin, who was a genuine "internationalist," singularly free from national intolerance, much more so than Marx and Engels who sometimes spoke the language of Teutonic arrogance and whose utterances could adorn an anti-Semitic lampoon.

But Russian social democracy still shunned prominent association with specifically Jewish causes. To be sure, in its press it denounced anti-Semitism in forceful terms; but it did not carry these denunciations in popular leaflets and pamphlets. For a socialist agitator, working among the grass-roots of the working-class, it was still unwise to appear in the role of an advocate of the Jews.

After the Kishinev pogrom, the Bund bitterly charged Russian social democracy with having failed to combat the anti-Semitic demons which had taken possession of the masses:

One is ashamed to say that so far only Svoboda³⁸ published a pamphlet about the Jews. And *Iskra*, while sparing no paper for the denigration of the Bund, did not find it possible to publish at least something on this subject. The Russian committees (of the RSDRP) are more interested in the enlightenment of the Jewish masses, their emancipation from prejudices . . . than in the eradication of ferocious anti-Semitism. It is possible that such a solicitous attitude towards the Jewish masses does them honor. But there is no doubt that from a revolutionary standpoint this is a great omission. It remains to be hoped that this mistake will in the end be recognized *although the price to be paid for this recognition will be dear.*³⁹

38. This pamphlet, published by the Social Revolutionary Party, was entitled *Vragi Li Nam Yevrei*, 1903. It seems to have been the only socialist pamphlet of its kind before the revolution.

39. *Posledniya Izvestiya* # 126. Underlined by E. G.

The implications of this charge, especially that of the underlined phrase, stung the writers of *Iskra* and provoked an angry reply.

While the Bureau of the Socialist International issued a proclamation condemning the Kishinev pogrom and calling on the workers not to remain silent ("Your silence," exhorted the proclamation, "would be criminal . . . Speak out, act."), the leading organs of the Russian socialist parties addressed no such clear appeal to their ranks, although some newspapers did print the Socialist Bureau's exhortation.⁴⁰

The gingerly and sporadic fashion in which Gentile socialists publicly condemned anti-Semitism caused an embittered disappointment in the hearts of the Jewish socialists, kindling their native tribal feelings which they had hitherto so zealously suppressed. A bloodbath had been visited upon the Jews of the city of Kishinev; yet in the face of that bloodbath so many Russian socialist leaders had assumed an unseemly silence.

Through the pangs of disillusion, Jewish socialists in Russia rediscovered the truth contained in the ancient melancholy motto of their people—*Am Ivadad yishkon*.

40. See, for instance, *Revolyutsionnaya Rossiya*, May 15, 1903, # 24, p. 8.

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Still Another View of Jesus

Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels. By GEZA VERMES. Macmillan, New York, 1974. 286 pp.

Reviewed by GERARD S. SLOYAN

THE MOST recent study on this subject from a Jewish pen is the brief but satisfying sketch of David Flusser entitled *Jesus* (1969). Joseph Klausner's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1925), written originally in Hebrew, is fated to be the most influential book on the Galilean teacher in the Jewish community for some time to come. Meanwhile, Martin Buber and Paul Winter are known in Jewish and Christian circles alike for their respectful treatments of Jesus in a scholarly context. Buber wrote, in *Two Types of Faith*: "I am more than ever certain that a great place belongs to (Jesus) in Israel's history of faith." It is to Winter, the Czech lawyer who lived out his days in London to become "the leading Jewish New Testament scholar of his generation," that Vermes, in those words, dedicates his book.

The present volume is respectful of Jesus and of Jewish institutions throughout, but lacking in respect for much of Christian New Testament scholarship. Largely, this attitude seems to be a matter, not of the theological predispositions of that literature—of which the author considers himself free in his role as historian—but, rather, the result of its ignorance of basic documentation about Jewish life in Palestine and the Diaspora. There is a strange reluctance here to award to modern New Testament critics the mantle of historian which so many claim, as if Professor Vermes had

himself discovered the historical approach to Jesus. The critics' chief shortcoming does not turn out to be their enforced reliance on Billerbeck and the articles in Kittel, or even their unfamiliarity with rabbinic and targumic lore, but, paradoxically, their critical skepticism.

Vermes is not a skeptic. He is inclined to think, despite what he describes as his "guarded optimism," that the gospels have a historical meaning at most points and that they say what they mean. C. H. Dodd and Norman Perrin emerge unscathed but the rest, especially those of the Bultmann school, are criticized roundly. Their offense is their dependence on Hellenistic or Hellenist-Jewish myths to account for New Testament titles and concepts (lord, son of man, son of God, return in parousial glory) that are much better accounted for in terms of Palestinian Aramaic usage or, in the last case, disregarded. It is to the exposition of such usage that this book is dedicated, in the conviction that Jesus as a charismatic holy man of the Hasidic type is wholly believable, while the "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God" of the fourth-century creed is not.

The Hungarian-born author, Reader in Jewish studies in the University of Oxford, is probably best known for his *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (1962; rev. 1965, 1968). He has spent his entire academic career in Judaica since the award of his Louvain doctorate in theology (1953), and currently edits the *Journal of Jewish Studies*. Much of his recent attention has been devoted to an updating (with Professor Fergus Millar) of Volume I of Emil Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the*

Age of Jesus Christ, announced for 1973 but delayed until this year. His note on the use of *bar nash/ bar nasha* in Jewish Aramaic serves as a useful appendix to the third edition of Matthew Black's *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (1967). He has also produced numerous studies on the Qumran scrolls.

Professor Vermes' plan is simplicity itself. After three initial chapters on the "setting"—Jesus the Jew, Jesus and Galilee, and Jesus and charismatic Judaism—he explores in five successive chapters the origins of various New Testament designations of Jesus: prophet, lord, messiah, *son of man*, and *son of God*. Following each chapter, there is an excursus, sometimes two, dealing with such topics as prophetic celibacy, Jesus as son of David, the cloud as a means of heavenly transport, and the relation between the title *son of God* and virgin birth. The tone adopted is conciliatory in all matters that touch on Jewish-Christian relations. This does not extend to a discussion of what Christian scholars, taking their cue from the Christian Church, have made of Jesus.

The fatal flaw of the church, for Vermes, was to conceive him in Greek terms, rather than remaining faithful to the way the "writers of the Gospels, echoing primitive tradition, wished him to be known." The author makes it clear on an early page (19) that such is his modest attempt, rather than any "authentic portrait of Jesus." He likewise professes disinterest in the theologians' business of what the words and events recorded in the Gospels were *believed* to signify, confining himself to the *historical* significance itself. It becomes clear, however, that he cannot maintain this disinterest, if only because he sees belief in matters such as the eternal pre-existence and the glori-

ous after-life of Christ crowding out the earthly career of Jesus. This career is a matter of potential importance to Jew and Christian alike, with the former peculiarly equipped to appreciate it. Vermes does not mean to write a destructive book, he says, but one which will avoid the distortions of Christian and Jewish myth alike, in the hope of making repayment to the tragic figure of Jesus of Nazareth of "a debt long overdue."

The style of the book read without its notes is easy. The learned will wish to check on every citation because the text, at many points, is provocative. In general, they will be satisfied. The Christian scholar (the reviewer cannot speak for the Jewish) will often regret the author's unfamiliarity with the New Testament scholarship that is so often dismissed with a shrug of impatience. If the author had spent a career coming abreast of it, however, he could not have made this special contribution to the study of Jesus. For this the Christian scholar can only be grateful.

It is impossible to estimate the impact of the book on Jewish readers except to say that it will be varied. Much will depend on the measure in which the first-century B.C.E. and C.E. rabbis Honi and Hanina ben Dosa have been admitted into their ken, on their tolerance for the Galilean liberation movement; and on their sympathy for the mystical element—understood as direct relation with God apart from the essential mediation of Torah—in Judaism. Professor Vermes is sympathetic to all of the above while, for the most part, he discounts apocalyptic Judaism, so prominent in New Testament study since Schweitzer (1906), as a formative influence on Jesus.

Speaking of Jesus, Hanina, and other charismatics, he writes: "Both laxity and severity were to them

peripheral: which is why the traditionalists in charge of the well-being of society imagined that they threatened to undermine and pervert the correct order of values and priorities." "Imagined" does not seem to be the right word here. They did so threaten that undermining, and all structured religious societies tend to be on their guard against teachings that attack their fabric. The teaching reported of Jesus in the gospels could be verified only by the effect of God in his life, not by the standard of *halakhah*. As Bowker has put it recently (*Jesus and the Pharisees*, p. 45), his claims and teachings "were, in fact, deeply threatening, not simply to the principles of the *Hakamim*, or to the authority of the Temple, but to the basic structure of Jewish life as a response to God's gift of Torah to his people." Vermes certainly knows this, as he knows how the *Hakamic* teaching prevailed at Yavneh—only a lively hope in Jesus' time—yet he avoids pointing it out. Doubtless this is because he is intent on showing the tolerance in Judaism for teachers like Jesus before that settlement was made.

If a main thrust of the book were to be named it would be the minimalist interpretation possible, indeed required, with regard to "lord," "son of man," and "son of God" culled from Jewish sources. Mark, the earliest gospel to be written, maintains these primitive senses best. A gradual departure from the Aramaic speech patterns on which Mark's *kyrios*, *ho huios tou anthropou*, and *ho huios tou Theou* are based is discernible in Matthew and Luke, while the early designation of Jesus as a prophet tends to disappear in church usage. (Vermes seems to recognize only the Mk/Mt/Jn traditions which see John the Baptist as Elijah, the messianic forerunner; Luke care-

fully casts Jesus in Elijah's role but, since that typology did not survive, this is probably not an important omission.) He maintains that none of the synoptic gospels tries to bridge the gulf between *son of God* and God. The identification of a contemporary historical figure with God would have been inconceivable to a first century C. E. Palestinian Jew: "Paul, the Jew from Tarsus at home in the Greco-Roman world, shies away from it. Even the theologizing author of the Fourth Gospel, writing a couple of generations later, shows understandable diffidence." Vermes quotes the "by no means radical" Oscar Cullmann in his opinion that "when 'God' is occasionally used apropos of Jesus in some of the epistles of the New Testament, this usage never exceeds the notion of exalted Lord and revelation incarnate" (p. 213).

Whether the book is valued for its wealth of parallels between the New Testament and Jewish sources, or faulted for its selective use of the latter, it must be hailed as an important contribution. It is idealistic in regretting certain developments which the person and teachings of Jesus underwent in the circle of believers in him. No matching regret over developments in Judaism appears, but that is not the business of this book. One thing it makes abundantly clear is that the next generation of New Testament scholars cannot do without Mishnaic and modern Hebrew as scholarly tools, just as the Jew committed to *Tanakh* and postbiblical Judaism cannot do without Greek.

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Jewish Mysticism It Ain't

Understanding The Kabbalah. By EDWARD ALBERTSON. Los Angeles. Sherbourne Press, For the Millions Series, 1973. 135 pp. \$2.50.

The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah. By LEO SCHAYA. Baltimore. Penguin Books, 1973. 168 pp. \$1.50.

Kabbalah, An Introduction and Illumination for the World Today. By CHARLES PONCÉ. San Francisco. Straight Arrow Books, 1973. 297 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by ROBERT SAKS

THIS is going to be a good year for Kabbalah. The Religion sections of bookstores, so dominated in recent years by the *I Ching* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, are suddenly being invaded by books on Jewish mysticism, including the paperbacks under review. And it's about time. For years the only decent paperback on the subject was Schollem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, and that scholarly masterpiece is so abstruse in parts that only the most persistent can really get much from it. The need for books on Kabbalah aimed at a mass market is obvious. Particularly in recent years, with the emergence of a new inwardness and quest for spiritual truth among young people, the value of books displaying the esoteric wisdom of Judaism is considerable. How unfortunate, then, that these three books under review are all so bad.

Understanding the Kabbalah, by Edward Albertson, "a noted researcher in occult subjects," can best be presented by selecting from the author's own words. If you can read things like the following without muttering obscenities, then you're welcome to this annoying book:

Ever since the middle ages when

Jewish occultists impressed and frightened Europe with their powers of summoning spirits (demons) and their prowess in alchemy, the Kabbalah has been a watchword of mystery. (p. 12)

Mention has been made of the twenty-two paths connecting the Sephiroth... they also correspond to the twenty-two trumps of the Tarot pack. (p. 36)

The path of the occultists rises from Sephirah to Sephirah... Those who choose this way also gain certain occult powers, and when they reach the higher realms, may become great magicians. (p. 36)

Elohim . . . is translated as God but in Hebrew it is a feminine noun with a masculine plural suffix, and should therefore be read in that context as: "In the beginning the Gods and Goddesses created the heaven and the earth. (p. 54)

The road to Kether passes through Tiphareth, which is the meaning of Jesus' words: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." This is written in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel According to John, who must certainly have been a Kabbalist, for he said in the Tenth chapter: "I am the door: by me if any man enter, he shall be saved." (p. 78)

The magical image of Netzach is a beautiful naked woman... And, before all else, can we image the ancient patriarchs and rabbi (sic) presenting us with such an image if they had thought it prurient? (p. 85)

Albertson writes from within the Christian occult and theosophic traditions. His version of Kabbalah is a truncated distortion of the full system developed by the Jewish mystics. He never mentions, for example, the *mizvot* and their role in bringing about *tikkun*, though this is central to Kabbalah. He is

interested in tying in the Kabbalah to Christian and Oriental mysticism, alchemy, magic, and Tarot card divination, and in so doing he distorts it almost beyond recognition. This, combined with his often incredible spellings (e.g. Haggidah, Otz Chiim, and the sage ibn Gabriol) and some infuriating right-wing sermonettes against "humanitarians," "the welfare class," and "socialism" (all this based on his liking for the Sephirah Gevurah) make this a totally frustrating book. Unfortunately, it is being widely distributed, reads well, and has a cheap price. It is the poorest of the three books under consideration, but will probably sell the best.

Leo Schaya, in *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah* is, like Albertson, concerned with rediscovering

in Judaism the *philosophia perennis* that he learned through the Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi traditions. (p. 3)

By trying to cram Kabbalah into the same mold as these other esoteric teachings he also distorts it, misreading it as primarily a doctrine concerning emanation, and ignoring such basic Kabbalistic themes as the exile of Israel and the Shekhinah and the redemptive work of the *mizvot*. He gives but little hint of the *sitra ahra*, the "other side," and its role in the cosmic scheme. His emasculated version captures little of the drama of Kabbalistic mythology.

Even within these limits, Schaya's detailed description of the process of emanation through the Sephiroth would be useful if the book were not so dully written and if it were not marred by occasional errors, such as his excluding the writings of Vital on Lurianic Kabbalah from his list of "the most important collections of the esoteric doctrine in Judaism;" his

speaking of the *union* of God and man, though Jewish mysticism is characterized by its emphasis on seeing, or, at most, cleaving to, God, but rarely by union with Him; and, finally, his arguing that in this age when we're near the Messianic end, Divine grace does away with "the many acts of devotion" required in times gone by. Despite these flaws, and even despite the narrowness of his view of Kabbalah, the main problem with this book is its tedious prose. Even if the content were better, it would be hard to recommend this volume to any but the most tenacious.

Stylistic weakness is the one thing that Charles Ponce's *Kabbalah: An Introduction and Illumination* does not suffer from. This volume is beautifully prepared (it should be—it costs enough!), lavishly illustrated, and nicely written. The attractiveness and "coolness" of its layout will be enough to recommend it to many, but it, too, unfortunately, suffers from serious errors in its presentation.

Poncé is also concerned with drawing parallels between Kabbalah and other esoteric doctrines, though he is aware of the dangers in this. As he rightly says:

There exist innumerable texts in the West purporting to outline the fundamentals of Kabbalism, which actually obscure its principal theories. This is not to say that a great deal of Christian Kabbalism is not without merit and invention, but rather that it abounds with topics generally foreign to Kabbalism and which on the whole have come to dominate its characteristically Jewish elements. (p. 19)

This having been said, we would expect from Poncé not only the customary review of the Kabbalah's doctrines on the *En Sof* and the *Sephiroth* but a discussion of such "characteristically Jewish elements"

as the interpretation of Exile, the cosmic role of the Jewish people, and the relationship between the *mizvot* and *tikkun*. Poncé skips all of these, justifying the last omission with a tirade, certainly uncharacteristic of most of the Kabbalah, against the place of ritual in religion.

Poncé's work does have its strengths though, including a lengthy introduction to the basic mystic and non-mystic literature of Judaism, and a short summary of the history of Jewish mysticism. This summary includes a nice synopsis of *Sefer Yetzirah*, a work which all three of our authors are attracted to. On the other hand, his treatment of German Hasidism is superficial and misses the point on such a basic matter as its concept of the words of prayer as keys, through *gematria*, to the unity of all creation. Poncé can be forgiven for his weakness here, as the best source for the doctrines of the Hasidei Ashkenaz is Dan's Hebrew work *Torot HaSod Shel Hasidut Ashkenaz*, but it is hard to excuse his claim that Moses Cordovero wrote "Lechah Dodi," his use of *pereks* as the plural of *perek*, or his description of Luria as being primarily interested in the practical side of Kabbalah. Though he can perhaps be excused for the weaknesses in his presentation of the teachings of Lurianic Kabbalah, since he does not apparently have access linguistically to such basic sources as Tishbi's *Torat HaRa VeHaKelipah be-Kabbalat HaAri*, it is impossible to ignore his claim that the Hasidic movement believed that "study was worthless." Equally inexcusable is the proof-reading which allows Hebrew words, in Hebrew characters, to be continuously misspelled.

Poncé concludes with a section on "The Kabbalah Today" in which he expresses his own views,

which are—and he should have had the honesty to admit this—totally foreign to the teachings of much of the Kabbalah. For example:

The work of redemption is the sole responsibility of man. To achieve it he must not only accept the reality of evil, but must *penetrate* (italics are mine) it for meaning. This he must do in direct opposition to the traditional attitude which causes Rabbinic Judaism to shrug its shoulders at the mere mention of the problem. (p. 228)

These sentiments might be in place from a Sabbatal Zevi, but few, if any, normative Kabbalists would utter them. Similarly distorted is his view that:

The rituals of Rabbinic Judaism are primarily rites of remembrance and cognition which bring into being nothing but memories of the historical reality of the Jews. Such rituals only divorce the Jew from the immediacy of reality, from the here and now. They transform nothing... The philosophical nature of the Halachah, lacking the emotion necessary for ecstasy, could not inaugurate the process of transformation which spiritual and religious fulfillment requires. Only the mythical ritual of the Kabbalists could achieve that. (p. 229)

Somehow, one feels that Poncé would be terribly disheartened if he could see the real Moses de Leon, not a modern-day "freak," but an observant Jew teaching a doctrine which explained how and why the transformative power of ecstasy could give new meaning and new power precisely to the areas of ritual and law. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Poncé's bias in favor of "ecstasy," "nature," and giving evil "its rightful place" have led him to present as

distorted and inadequate a view of the Kabbalah as those Christian Kabbalists he himself condemns.

The paperback shelves are now embellished with three new books on Kabbalah. For all their worth, those shelves could just as well be empty. Not one of them has caught the Jewish flavor of the Kabbalah. When one compares their contents with a similar book, older, in hard-cover, and more difficult to find, *Kabbalah: The Light of Redemption*, by Rabbi Levi Krakovsky, the differences are glaring. Krakovsky, like them, has a detailed exposition of the Kabbalah's doctrine of emanation, but stated accurately. In addition, however, he discusses, as any decent book on Kabbalah should, precisely those crucial concepts which the books under review ignore, fundamental concepts such as the 612 *mitzvot* and their relation to the Jewish soul; the Torah as an infinitely deep mystic text worthy of untiring study; prayer as a path to God's presence; the mystic meaning of Israel's exile, and the crucial role of the Jews in the cosmic drama. A work on Kabbalah should give a rounded and balanced view of all its aspects instead of distorting its doctrines to make them acceptable to a wide audience. With such a work you would know that Kabbalah is Jewish, and that, in the last analysis, is what is missing from these other books.

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The Movements in Modern Judaism

Four Paths to One God: Today's Jew and His Religion. By GILBERT S. ROSENTHAL. New York. Bloch Pub., Co., 1973. 323 pp. \$8.95.

Reviewed by ELLIOT B. GERTEL

UNTIL fairly recently, the religious movements in American Judaism were the possession of their ideologues, who labored to propagate the validity and organizational programs of their point of view and its history. Most American Jews have been builders of the institutions of an idea, rather than partners in the development of the idea itself. Of course, no ideologue developed his idea in a vacuum. He could influence a constituency because he was weaned on the spiritual conflicts and social upheavals that characterized his age.

The overwhelming majority of American Jews who have chosen to affiliate with one of the religious movements have selected a congregation for family, social or economic reasons, or have done so through a process of elimination based upon the comparative atmosphere of congregations, or their own personal diligence, laxity or compromise in matters of religious observance. Yet, in recent years, there has been a heightened interest on the part of "lay" Jews in the comparative attitudes and histories of the major Jewish ideological tendencies. Such interest may derive from the fact that most Jews are no longer struggling to build institutions, and are trying to understand *why* they were built. Perhaps it derives from the popularization of sociology in recent years with regard to urban patterns of settlement, or from the proliferation of Jewish studies on the campus, a phenomenon which has particularly impressed professionals

who could never have imagined a chair in Judaica in their *alma mater*.

The first thinker to engage the masses of American Jewry in a serious analysis of existing ideologies was Mordecai M. Kaplan, when he offered his critique of the various established Jewish religious tendencies in *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934). Kaplan, who expanded and reiterated his contentions in *The Greater Judaism in the Making* (1960) influenced his gifted disciple and colleague, Rabbi Milton Steinberg, who delineated the sociological tendencies behind the religious movements in *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem* (1945), where he portrayed what he regarded as the "typical" member of each group. The first thinker who objectively presented the histories and ideologies of the major movements is Israel H. Levinthal, in *Point of View* (1958), a small but suggestive volume which dealt, not only with the major issues, but became a classic work in modern Jewish homiletical literature, its contents being the transcription of sermons originally delivered by the author at the Brooklyn Jewish Center Congregation.

In *Four Paths to One God: Today's Jew and His Religion*, Gilbert S. Rosenthal has

tried to depict the religious life of American Jews in an objective way so that Jews and non-Jews, collegians and intelligent adults, may understand somewhat better how Jewry in America has built its religious and cultural institutions, how its ideologies and ritual patterns differ, and how the religious trends are evolving in Jewish life in North America. (pp. ix-x)

The book is, indeed, a veritable treasure-trove of materials on various aspects of American Ortho-

dox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism. It is divided into four parts, one for each movement. It is highly readable, possesses a helpful index, and deals with the historical and ideological attitudes of those movements with regard to such issues as the nature of Judaism, God, Torah, the Jewish People, the Land of Israel, the Jewish community, the synagogue, social action and interfaith relations. Each movement is examined in the light of these topics on the basis of the assertions of its own spokesmen—a tribute to Rosenthal's objectivity. Furthermore, Rosenthal generally avoids value judgments on a particular movement's response to these topics, and he does not analyze them against his own standards of observance or ideology. A helpful summary follows Rosenthal's exposition of each religious movement.

Given its basic objectivity and the author's lucidity and painstaking research, the book is an effective source material which can be used for home, college, or synagogue study of the historical background and development, as well as of the leading currents of thought, in each of the four streams of Jewish ideology. Even so there are a few stereotypes to be found here which stand out all the more because of the book's basic objectivity, and tend to strike this reviewer as slight but noticeable lapses in a volume that is essentially as credible as it is readable. Also, there are a few omissions of historico-sociological and theological concepts whose presence would greatly enhance the perspective of the book without unduly lengthening it. I should like to suggest some of these by pointing them out in Rabbi Rosenthal's treatment of each movement.

In his treatment of Orthodoxy,

for example, he reiterates a rather harsh stereotype, frequently muttered in non-Orthodox ideological polemics. "Even the great tragedy of the Holocaust," he writes, "has left Orthodox thinkers untroubled. There is little theodicy among Orthodox theologians, little attempt to justify God's ways to man. . . ." (p. 56). While it is true, as Rosenthal notes, that leading Neo-Orthodox spokesmen have themselves expressed disappointment with prevailing indifferences to theology among their colleagues, and that Orthodox thinkers have upheld the classical Biblical-Rabbinic concept of evil as deriving from Divine bestowal of human freedom (as have Conservative and Reform thinkers), I feel that he has unjustly charged Orthodoxy with a theological detachment from the Holocaust. *Tradition* has published some essays on the topic, as have some Neo-Orthodox thinkers. The author ignores Eliezer Berkovits' book, *Faith After the Holocaust* (1973), which certainly deals movingly with deeply-felt theological questions. So, too, the author might have paid more attention to Berkovits' book on *Prayer* (1962), published by Yeshiva University Press, which alludes to the Holocaust while discussing the role of martyrdom in Jewish tradition, and to Marvin Luban's study, *The Kadish: Man's Reply to the Problem of Evil* (1962), from the same press, which is one of the most moving works on theodicy known to this reviewer. Surely Rosenthal does not believe that any one group in Judaism could be less anguished over the Holocaust, less anxious to comprehend Divine self-vindication, than any other group. To be sure, Orthodoxy embraces a wide cross-section of attitudes which Rosenthal has delineated quite thoroughly. But, certainly, one can sense a troubled soul in the writ-

ings of those who feel compelled to reiterate the classical view with theological creativity, as has been effectively done by Berkovits in particular.

Rosenthal also missed a splendid opportunity to set old stereotypes straight by failing to stress some areas where Neo-Orthodox thinkers have contributed to general Jewish theological inquiry. I refer specifically to Emmanuel Rackman's concept of the "dialectic of the *halakhah*," presented in *One Man's Judaism* (1970). Rackman's intriguing assertion is that *halakhah* is comprised of conflicting values, such as the poles of "freedom" and "sexual morality," the tension between which enables the sages of each generation to adjust the law while remaining within its essential valuational framework. It is to Rosenthal's credit that he offers the reader an introduction to Rackman's thought (p. 64) characterized by the consistent clarity of *Four Paths*. While we certainly do not demand that Rosenthal take time to pat everybody on the back with a *yasher koah* in his treatment of the major thinkers of each movement, he might have stressed a bit more the contributions of Rackman's writings to general inquiry concerning the dynamics of the *halakhah* and the problem of religion and values, if not for the merit of these writings, which is substantial, then for the counterbalancing of the stereotype that Orthodox "theologizing" has yielded but sour grapes to anyone unwilling to accept Orthodox strictures.

In his treatment of Reform, Rosenthal portrays quite well the major historical developments and theological trends, and deals effectively, also, with the concepts of Revelation of the major Reform thinkers, past and present. One would have wished, however, that

Isaac M. Wise's views be presented in far more detail, instead of simply asserting that Wise "believed" in Revelation (p. 117), and of briefly pointing out that Wise had an aversion to Biblical criticism. (p. 93). Rosenthal should have elaborated on Wise's affirmations, explored by James Heller in his authoritative biography, *Isaac M. Wise* (1965, pp. 517ff.), of the Mosaic authorship of Torah and of the distinction of the Ten Commandments as being the content of Sinaitic Revelation, which, together with the "verities revealed to Moses and the prophets," comprise the essence of God's Revelation to man. Treatment of this view is essential for an understanding of the development of Reform Judaism from the "hands off" policy on critical study of the Pentateuch, as articulated by the most influential ideologue of its formative years, to the subsequent emphasis in Reform preaching and adult educational materials on the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch. It must be emphasized also that while the critical German reformers who transplanted themselves in America succeeded in influencing their contemporaries to the degree that their rationalistic jargon (such as "God-concept") could be found in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, the voice behind that document was the voice of Isaac M. Wise, although it was written in the hand of Einhornian rationalism.

Rosenthal could also have accentuated a bit more the *social* as well as *ritual* basis of the ideological cleavage between Wise and the far more radical David Einhorn which was to affect profoundly the course of American Reform. As Jakob J. Petuchowski has noted (*Heirs of the Pharisees*, 1970, pp. 15-16), Einhorn was a German Jewish elitist who wished to limit

the ranks of Reform to German Jewry, or at least to the intellectually and social elite of American Jewry. Wise, on the other hand, although equally vexed by the "incurable orthodoxy" and Yiddish "jargon" of East European Jews, fought to *democratize* Reform, and hoped to see the immigrants reconstituted as farmers and "liberalized" in order to break them of their urbanish, "ghettoized" Orthodoxy (Heller, pp. 583-84).

It is true that after he saw that most Russian Jews refused to be "reformed," Wise, himself, drew a distinction between the acculturated "American Israelite" and the backward, immigrant "Jew." But his efforts to bring Reform to the masses laid the groundwork for the movement's tremendous growth and influence during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and for the current re-orientation toward tradition in Reform congregations, Rosenthal (pp. 119ff.) does catch quite well the ambivalence to *halakhah* that characterized Wise, as opposed to Einhorn's lack of qualms about casting off what he considered to be the "husk." Indeed, Rosenthal's analysis of Wise's thoughts and outlooks is quite convincing, as he relies upon what Wise said and does not succumb to the temptation to "psychoanalyze" which characterizes the (generally bad) modern treatments of Jewish thinkers from Moses to the Hasidim. It is interesting to note, as well, that Wise emerges as the personality treated with the most detail in this book, with the exception, of course, of Mordecai Kaplan. Both of these men succeeded in molding a movement in their image.

Rosenthal's depiction of the development of trends within Conservative Judaism is as abundant in pertinent information as are his

parallel treatments of Orthodoxy and Reform. However, Rosenthal does not seem to outline Conservative views of Revelation with the thoroughness with which he delineated those of Reform. While Rosenthal concentrates upon the writings of Robert Gordis, indeed one of Conservatism's most gifted ideologues, he does not significantly delve into the varied Conservative attitudes about Divine communication with man which represent some of the movement's most substantial and challenging contributions to modern Jewish theology. One misses the distinctive concepts of "Primary" and "Secondary" Revelation presented by Ben Zion Bokser and Simon Greenberg in their respective volumes, *Judaism: Profile of a Faith* (1963) and *Foundations of a Faith* (1967). Moreover, it is surprising that the most versatile philosophical writer of the Conservative Movement, Jacob Agus, is hardly mentioned, despite the fact that his book, *Guideposts in Modern Judaism* (1954) is one of the classics of modern religious thought as well as of Conservative Jewish thought, and presents Agus' concept of Revelation as a "psychic attitude conditioned by a historical situation," when the internal Revelation implicit in God's creation of man "in His image" is quickened by a historical situation. We also miss some detailed attention to the view of Louis Finkelstein, leader at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America for decades, that *Torah* is a "symbolic system" of observance for the purpose of expressing "basic ideas," "particularly in the form of commanded behavior," which are formulated "in a series of forms which must be acted out as in a pageant, not articulated as verbal assertions."

Had Rosenthal delineated somewhat more the views of Revelation

and *halakhah* of the leading ideologues of Conservatism, he would have been better able to give the reader a perspective of the varied philosophies which render Conservatism the most diversified movement, theologically speaking. For example Rosenthal might have accentuated the essential contrast between Heschel's view of Revelation as an *event* and the concepts of evolutionary Revelation of Agus and Gordis. So, too, a contrast of Conservatism's various views of the role of the *mizvot* would have been in order. Thus, Rosenthal might have contrasted Finkelstein's idea of the *mizvot* as a system symbolizing the approaches of two schools with Max Kadushin's idea that the *mizvot* reflect no system at all, but concretize the "warmly-felt value concepts" that develop through the interaction of the people with the "conceptual terms" of sacred literature. These views might have, in turn, been compared with Louis Ginzberg's view of the *halakhah* as "active righteousness," as both repository and concretization of Jewish values, and with Heschel's parallel view of *halakhah* as *non-symbolic* (man being the only symbol in Judaism: the symbol of God on earth), as the tangible sanctification of time which represents no particular system. Rosenthal *does* present most of these viewpoints with clarity. What he might have done, would be to stress their relationships and differences. A page or two would have sufficed.

I am a bit troubled by the author's assertion, at the end of his treatment of Conservatism, that it may be understood as a "middle-of-the-road approach to Judaism" (p. 211). While such a characterization is *ritually* apt, I think it is necessary to point out that it is *historically* untrue, as Conservatism is far more distinctive and complex an entity in its historical genesis.

If Solomon Schechter, Louis Ginzberg and Moshe Davis have proved anything, it is that the branch of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* known as American Conservative Judaism is the fruit of a *unique Weltanschauung*, which is "middle-of-the-road" only to the extent that it grew in reaction to *two* ideologies, just as both *those* ideologies grew in reaction and counter-reaction to each other. The historical fact to be considered here is that Zechariah Frankel, the nineteenth century precursor of Conservatism, formulated his idea of "Positive Historical Judaism" *at the same time* that the Reformers were developing their platform, which was in turn to be combatted by Hirschian Neo-Orthodoxy.

Rosenthal's portrayal of Reconstructionism, itself an outgrowth of Conservative ideology, is as thorough and objective a depiction of that young movement as one could hope to find. Yet we are surprised by the author's stereotyped characterization of Reconstructionism as the "most philosophical, intellectual and cerebral of the Movements in Jewish religious life" (p. 229). Surely the "brain power" of *every* movement attests to the fact that the Almighty does not play favorites while bestowing inspired leaders and phenomenal intellects.

One wishes that in his treatment of Reconstructionism, Rosenthal dealt with Richard Rubenstein's "death of God" theology. Indeed, one Reconstructionist leader, employing William James' term, described Rubenstein to me as the most "tough minded" thinker on the editorial board of "Reconstructionist" magazine. Rubenstein's no-

tion that Judaism needs to continue in the post-Auschwitz age in order to wed unique traditional rites and their insights with psychoanalytical concepts is, *mutatis mutandis*, related to Mordecai Kaplan's idea that every civilization is entitled to perpetuate itself because of its distinctive approach to the eternal dilemmas and *rites de passage* of human existence.

Rosenthal's "Critique and Prognosis" provides a fair glimpse into the self-criticism found in each movement—another tribute to the book's spirit of objectivity and dialogue. His observations on Orthodox "hatred" and "fear" of Conservatism (p. 267) are certainly not unjustified, and yet, as Marshall Sklare has noted (*Conservative Judaism*, 1972, pp. 261 ff), that "fear" has heretofore been quite mutual and, one might add, the "hatred" has been more a mutual *ambivalence* stemming from Neo-Orthodox intellectuals' struggle to rediscover *halakhic* flexibility and Conservatism's battle for a sense of what Gerson Cohen describes as "religious legitimacy."

Even given the reservations enumerated in the above paragraphs, Rosenthal's book will certainly prove a valuable repository for the searching reader. There is little doubt that it will be widely read and discussed, as it is, so far, the most comprehensive guide available to those perplexed by the ideological lines that seem so blurred to many Jews and non-Jews alike.

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